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MARCH 1996

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PC GAMER

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3 • MARCH 1996

Cover Story



The Year's BEST GAMES

64 Second Annual PC Gamer Awards

1995 was a great year for PC gaming, and after considerable discussion and just a few arguments, we're ready to announce the best of the best. We couldn't convince Billy Crystal to host the proceedings — but then again, we won't stop every five minutes for another Pepsi commercial.

Features



83 An Exclusive Look at Links LS and The Golf Club

Brace yourselves, PC golfers; an amazing update of *Links* is on the horizon — and it's going to have some pretty impressive competition.

Scoops!

Get an in-depth look at some of the games you'll be playing in the near future.



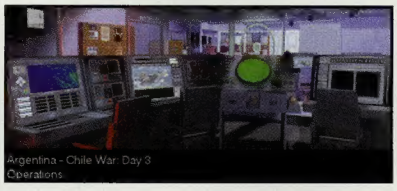
36 Afterlife

Forget about managing little cities, puny civilizations or mere galactic empires. That's child's play, best left to mere mortals. Now it's time to take charge of Heaven and Hell!



42 Robert E. Lee's Civil War General

How well would you do if you were in General Lee's boots? The creators of *Caesar II* turn their talents to the War Between the States.



45 Jet Fighter III

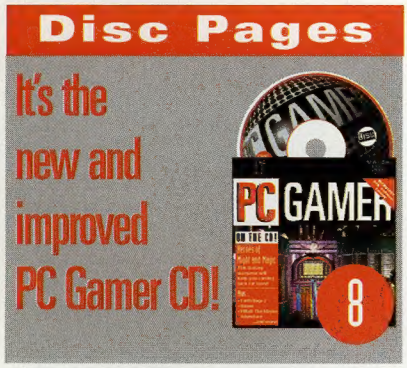
Mission Studios' new air combat sim lets you hop into the cockpits of some of the world's finest fighters — without spending hours memorizing manuals.

Reviews

We squeeze the Charmin so you don't have to.

114 Absolute Zero
144 Air Power
113 Anvil of Dawn
146 Battleground: Gettysburg
141 Conqueror, A.D. 1086
99 Destruction Derby
123 Druid: Daemons of the Mind
124 EF2000
138 Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96
108 Full Tilt Pinball
137 Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf
108 Knight Moves
129 Lion
100 Police Quest: S.W.A.T.
104 Quarterback Attack
133 Road Warrior
118 Shivers
130 Total Distortion
134 Unnecessary Roughness '96
116 Virtual Karts
96 Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness
107 Worms
116 You Don't Know Jack

Disc Pages



Departments

49 Eyewitness
Industry News, Game Previews, the *PC Gamer* Playlist, and more.

149 Extended Play — T. Liam McDonald
Tom takes off into the wild blue yonder with the latest news from the flight-sim front.

153 The Learning Game — Heidi E.H. Aycock
Heidi grabs her skis and takes on a mountain of new educational titles.

157 Peripheral Visions — Dan Bennett
A test-drive of Falcon Northwest's Mach V, a PC created by gamers for gamers.

158 Lupine Online — Scott Wolf
The Wolf hunts down some great new shareware and intriguing web sites.

161 Alternate Lives — Trent C. Ward
Our roleplaying expert has a double-shot of good news for fans of *Betrayal at Krondor.*

162 The Desktop General — William R. Trotter
American Heritage's new Civil War package falls frustratingly short of the mark.

165 Sim Column — Lee Buchanan
Sierra On-Line acquires the developers of *NASCAR Racing* and *IndyCar II.*

166 Tim's Tech Shop — Tim Victor
Is Intel's new Pentium Pro the processor for you? Tim has the answers.

168 Strategy Central
Whether you can defeat *Descent* blindfolded or are hopelessly puzzled by *Reader Rabbit,* Strategy Central will help you improve your gameplay.

179 Letters
The Pen is mightier than the Sword — at least on these two pages.

184 Next Issue
Find out today why you're going to buy next month's *PC Gamer.*

145 Subscription Information
Go ahead. Subscribe to *PC Gamer.* You know you want to.

182 Customer Service Information



The Cream of the Crop

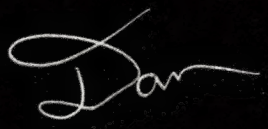
It's a common misconception that entertainment critics love nothing more than ripping apart another person's work. But — with the notable exception of Rex Reed — that's just not true.

Sure, when we come across a PC game that's truly, blatantly, unabashedly awful, we get a little kick out of saying so in no uncertain terms and warning our readers to spend their cash elsewhere. But heck — we *have* to play these games, whether they're good or not, so we'd much rather get our hands on a really great one.

There's nothing like popping that fifth or sixth new game of the week into the old CD-ROM drive — then suddenly realizing three hours have passed like three minutes, and you're still playing it.

We enjoy giving those games special recognition: a glowing review; a high rating; maybe even Editors' Choice honors.

But what about the best of *those* games? Surely they deserve even more attention. That's where the *PC Gamer* Awards come in. They start on page 64, so put on your tux or formal gown, and we'll meet you there.



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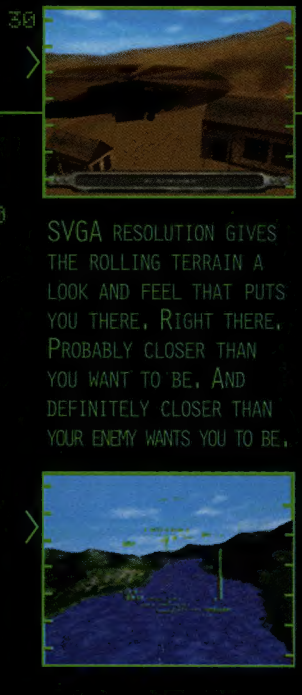
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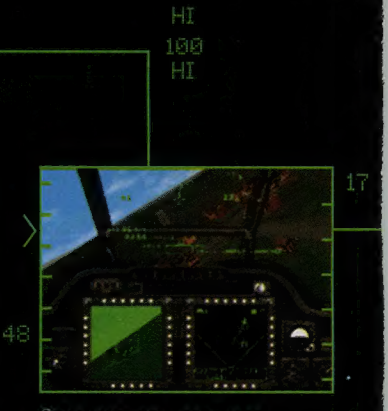
THE AH-64D LONGBOW AS SEEN BY AN ENEMY TANK.



THE RADAR DOME POPS UP ABOVE TREE LEVEL. YOU SPOT AN ENEMY TANK. IT DOESN'T SPOT YOU. UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE. THIS IS AS CLOSE AS YOU'LL EVER GET TO FLYING AN AH-64D LONGBOW WITHOUT SECURITY CLEARANCE.



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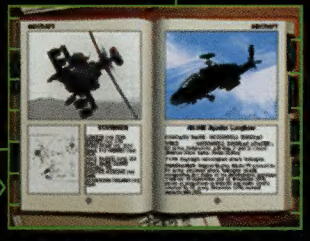


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AN ENEMY TANK AS SEEN BY THE AH-64D LONGBOW.





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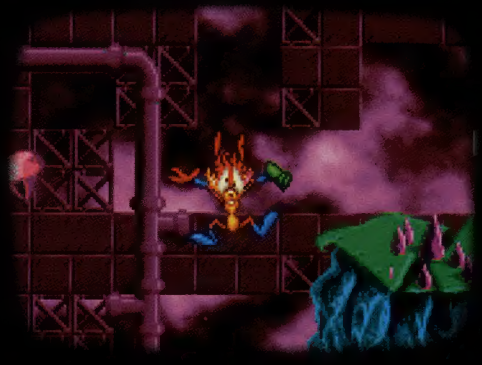
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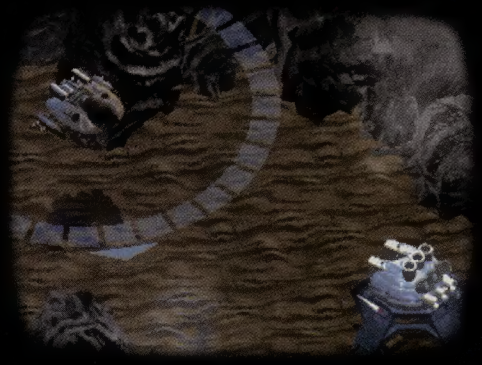
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The plot thickens...

Welcome back to *PC Gamer* country. Go ahead and pop The CD into your computer, and be sure to say hello to our receptionist, Cheryl.

We'd like to say our office isn't always this cluttered, but frankly, this is as good as it gets. And we can always find what we're looking for. Eventually.

Speaking of which, the Case of the Missing Monkey continues. If you've been playing along, you've probably already got the name of the dastardly villain who kidnapped Rikits, the official *PCG* monkey. But we still don't know where he's hiding — and we can't go harassing every mysterious guy who happens to be hiding a monkey under his trench coat. In this town, that could take years.

So we still need your help. Write down the full name of the kidnapper and keep it somewhere safe. And if you happen to find his address in this month's CD, jot that down, too. Don't call or E-mail us just yet — we've got to keep the lines open in case the kidnapper calls again. Keep watching *The CD* in the coming months; when you've got all the pieces of the puzzle, you'll know what to do.

Entering Our World

You begin in the secluded alley that leads to the hidden *PC Gamer* elevator. Move your mouse pointer around the screen, and you'll notice it turns into an arrow. Click, and you'll move in the direction of the arrow.

Click on the door handle to open the elevator, then click forward to step inside. Turn around until you're facing the front of the elevator and click on the elevator button. (If you need more help with the elevator, check out the hints on page 9.)

Once you're in our offices, you can move around using the mouse. To check out the game demos, click on the jukebox. When you're ready to leave, move your mouse to the top of the screen, and a menu will appear with an exit option.

Quick Start for The CD

Our new front end is Windows-based, so setup couldn't be easier:

1. Insert the CD and load Windows.
2. From the RUN option (found under the File menu in Windows 3.1 or under Windows 95's Start menu) type X:SETUP (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will create the *PC Gamer* icon group. Click on the icon, and *The CD* will launch.



Using the Jukebox

System Requirements

486/33, 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; Mouse (Win 3.1 users will need to be sure they've got the SHARE.EXE utility loaded)

These requirements are for loading our front end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Click on one of the six category buttons, and the demos in that category will appear on the monitor.



Click on the name of the demo you're interested in, and you'll receive installation info.

Attention Win95 Users

The new *PC Gamer* front end should work fine with Windows 95. To install and run some DOS game demos, you may need to reboot into a DOS session. If the videos appear as full-screen sequences, you should enter the Control Panel's Multimedia option and set it to View in Window.

Free Demos

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s new look at our World Wide Web site at *http://www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.
2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 696-1661 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have the CD mailed to you for only $5.95 (shipping and handling).

Elevator Hints

So, you've broken the *PC Gamer* elevator, huh? Some guest you turned out to be.

If you can't figure out how to start the elevator moving down to our offices, think like a car thief. Have you ever hot-wired an elevator? Click on the sparking wires that were exposed when the elevator control panel fell apart, and you'll be on your way down to *PC Gamer* country.

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the *Heroes of Might and Magic* demo:

Type **CD\HEROES** and press Enter
Type **INSTALL.EXE** and press Enter

The demo of *Heroes of Might and Magic* will then be installed on your PC.

** on chart at right = Must install through Windows.* Silent Thunder, Pitfall, Full Tilt Pinball, EarthSiege 2, *and* Shockwave Assault *require Windows 95.*

Contents/Manual Installation Commands

Demo	Directory	Installation Command
Heroes of Might and Magic	\HEROES	INSTALL.EXE
I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream	\	INSTALL.EXE
Hexen	\HEXNDEMO	INSSTHEXN.BAT
HardBall 5	\HB5DEMO\DEMO	HB5DEMO.EXE
The Incredible Machine Ver. 3.0 *	\TIM30	SETUP.EXE
Advanced Civilization	\ACIVDEMO	ACIV.EXE
Lion	\LIONDEMO	SETUP.EXE
Silent Thunder *	\SILENT	SETUP.EXE
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure *	\	PITSTART.EXE
Full Tilt Pinball *	\PINBALL	SETUP.EXE
EarthSiege 2 *	\EARTHSGE	SETUP.EXE
Star Rangers	\SRDEMO	INSTALL.EXE
Vigilance on Talos V	\TALOSV	INSTTAL.BAT
Space Bucks *	\SBUCKS	SETUP.EXE
Locus	\LOCUS	LOCUS.EXE
Shockwave Assault *	\SW_DEMO	AUTORUN.EXE
Black Knight	\BKNIGHT	INSTBK.BAT
America Online *	\AOL	SETUP.EXE
Doom WADs	\DOOM	
Doom 2 WADs	\DOOM2	
Heretic WADs	\HERETIC	
Hexen WADs	\HEXEN	
Descent HOGs	\DESCENT	
Warcraft Levels	\WARCRAFT	
Bug Patches	\PATCHES	















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Heroes of Might and Magic

Company: New World Computing, Inc.
Tech Support: (818) 889-5650
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \HEROES\INSTALL.EXE

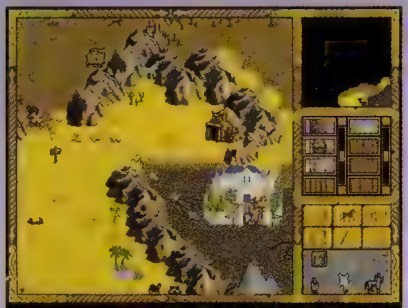
There's no better feeling than achieving complete world domination. If you're hankerin' for just such an experience, check out the demo of *Heroes of Might and Magic*, the *PC Gamer* Editors' Choice Award winner we still can't put down.

From the start, you're cast in the role of a king (not a bad way to begin). By directing the movement of your heroes, you can expand your kingdom outward from your keep, battle villainous monsters guarding precious items, and wage wars on other kings. Adding to your keep will bring in more creatures for your armies; for example, building a archery range gives you access to elven archers. To recruit more heroes, simply fork over the right amount of cash, and they'll follow you — as long as they're on the winning side.

The interface is as intuitive as the graphics are colorful. All commands are issued at the click of a mouse: To move your hero, click the left mouse button on the map while the on-screen cursor is shaped like a horse. The path the hero will take will appear — green colored lines indicated that, if you click again, the hero will travel along that path; red indicates he or she won't be able to travel that far in the current turn. To switch to different heroes, click their portraits on the right side of the screen.



No, those caped creatures on the right aren't relatives of The Hamburglar from McDonalds; they're rogues. They're easy enough to kill, but don't think all your battles will be this simple.



Move your heroes around with the mouse. Red lines indicate that your hero won't reach his destination until the next turn.

The castle can be built up through several layers. Click on the keep, and you'll see the building/recruiting screen. By clicking on various buildings, you can recruit creatures to swell your armies. To add to your domain, click on the keep itself. Certain structures give you access to useful creatures, while others enable special abilities, like the mage tower that provides your heroes with magical spells. If there is a check-mark in the corner of a picture, you already have that structure. If there's an X, it means you cannot build it right now — you probably need more resources.



As you gain treasure and raw materials, you'll be able to build a city around your keep.

New World Computing has provided a whopping 19 single games to let you try out the various tricks and strategies of *Heroes of Might and Magic*, and you'll have 20 game-days to gain control over as much territory as you can. In the full version of the game, you'll have even more missions, as well as the ability to take on campaigns and battle other human opponents in multi-player action.



On the building screen, you'll be able to create new structures and add to existing ones. A right-click on the structure portrait will tell you what is required to begin construction.

HINT

There's plenty to explore in each of the scenarios you can play. Whenever possible, go to structures that are not guarded. There's a good chance you'll find something that will help you build a better, stronger army to challenge the guardians of the more precious treasure.

LIE TO YOUR OPPONENTS.

BREAK TREATIES.

CHEAT MERCILESSLY.

IN OTHER WORDS, THINK OF IT AS A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR A CAREER IN NATION BUILDING.



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CNP1

CHART YOUR COURSE FOR THE INTERPLAY WEB SITE (http://www.interplay.com) & DOWNLOAD THE INTERACTIVE DEMO.

Product Information Number 123

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I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream

Company: Cyberdreams
Tech Support: (818) 222-9348
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VESA compatible SVGA card w/1MB RAM; Mouse
Install: \INSTALL.EXE

Far in the future, mankind entrusted the very existence of the world to a super computer named AM. The computer, put in charge of all the nuclear weaponry of the world, hides deep in the bowels of the Earth. Much to mankind's dismay, AM became sentient, and grew to hate the very beings that had created him. So, naturally, AM destroyed them all — all except five helpless people, forced to live out their lives playing the sadistic games AM sets before them. AM's torture of the five humans has continued unabated for one hundred and seven years. But it's about to end.

Based on the award-winning short story by science fiction legend Harlan Ellison, *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream* contains one of the most gripping and terrifying story lines ever seen in a graphic adventure. You control each of the five humans in a quest to end his or her misery, a goal only attainable by beating AM at his own game and confronting him directly. In this demo, you control Ellen, a computer science engineer who has been charged by AM to recover his basic components. Tormented by your past and terrified of the color yellow, you'll get a feel for the psychological drama portrayed in a graphic adventure that is definitely not for children or the faint of heart.

TECHNICAL NOTE: This demo is based on an early version of the game, so some video cards may not be directly supported. If the video doesn't look right when you start up, you may have to load the universal VESA driver. To do this, start the game by typing "SCREAM VESA" at the DOS prompt.



The non-interactive portion of the demo will give you a glimpse of the other tormented characters in this dark and disturbing adventure.

HINT

Some of the puzzles in this demo require you to perform certain actions in one locale before you can access options in another place. For example, you won't be able to ask Anubis about the sarcophagus before you look at it and try to open it. If you get stuck at any point, make sure you've tried doing everything you can think of with every object you come across.

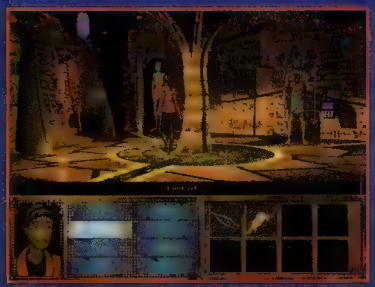
ROM Resolution



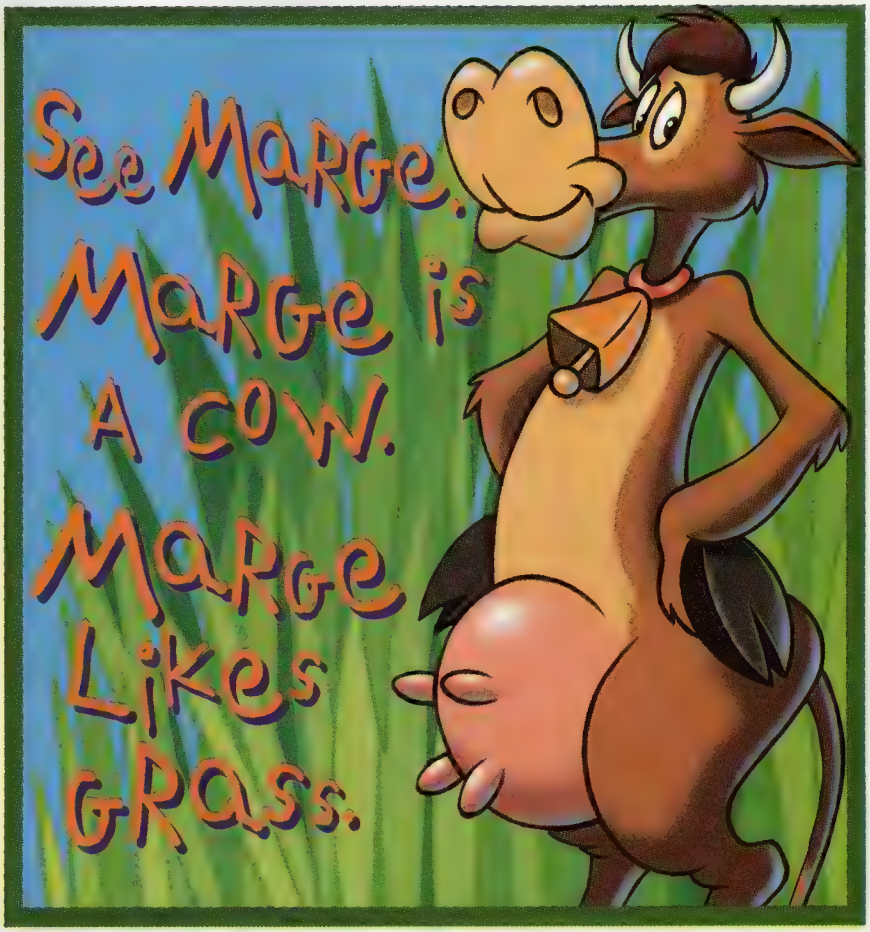
Anubis may be the Guardian of the Dead, but you'll need to get past him to open up the sarcophagus and finish the demo.



You'll need to supply power to this computer console before you can use it. Once you take the ROM chip from Anubis' chest and put it in the burner, you can change his program to make him much more friendly.



Once you've reprogrammed the guard, he'll give you the code you need to open up the sarcophagus. Of course, you may not like what you find.

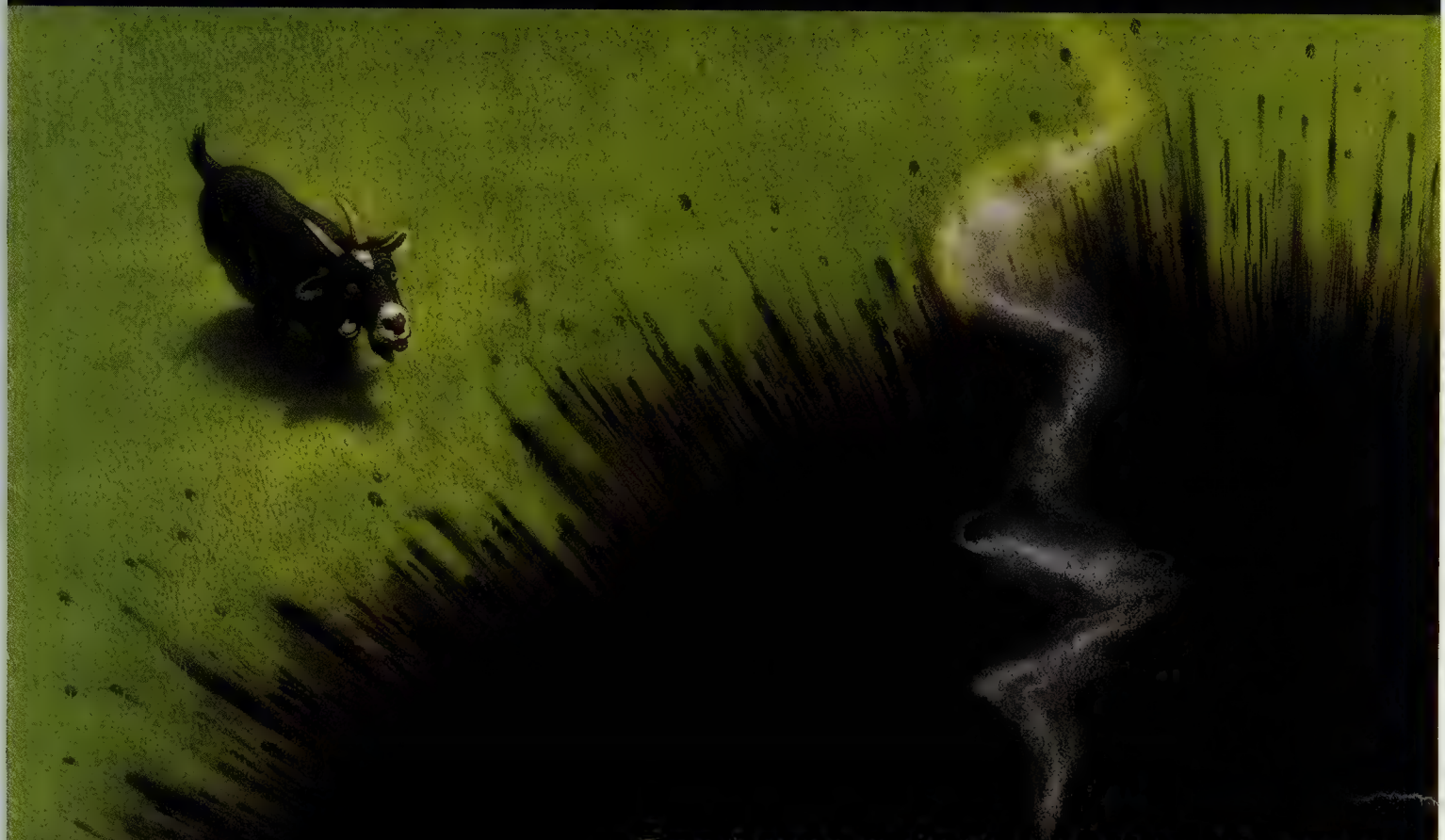


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ACES



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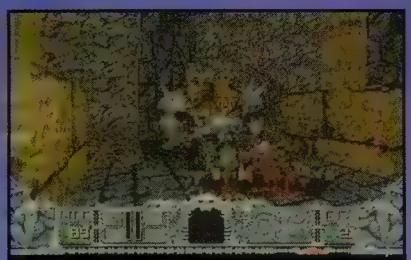
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KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+

Product Information Number 146



The Ettins are the first monsters you deal with. They're not that strong, but there's plenty of them.

Hexen

Company: id Software
Tech Support: (303) 339-7111
Release Date: Available Now
Category: First-person shooter
Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \HEXNDEMO\INSTHEXN.BAT



You saw D'Sparil ride one of these at the end of *Heretic*, and now you get to battle hordes of them. If you think the teeth are sharp, just wait until they start spitting fireballs at you!

In *Heretic*, you defeated the evil Serpent Rider D'Sparil. But that's not the end of the Serpent Riders. There are two more, and the second Rider is wreaking havoc on a world known as Hexen, in the Cronos dimension. Three of the last surviving members of its society — a wizard, a warrior, and a cleric — have banded together to fight the menace, only to be separated during their travels. Now, each goes his own way, hoping to defeat the creature that has virtually destroyed his world. But before he can do that, he'll need to battle through the minions, traps, and puzzles the evil Serpent Rider has left behind.

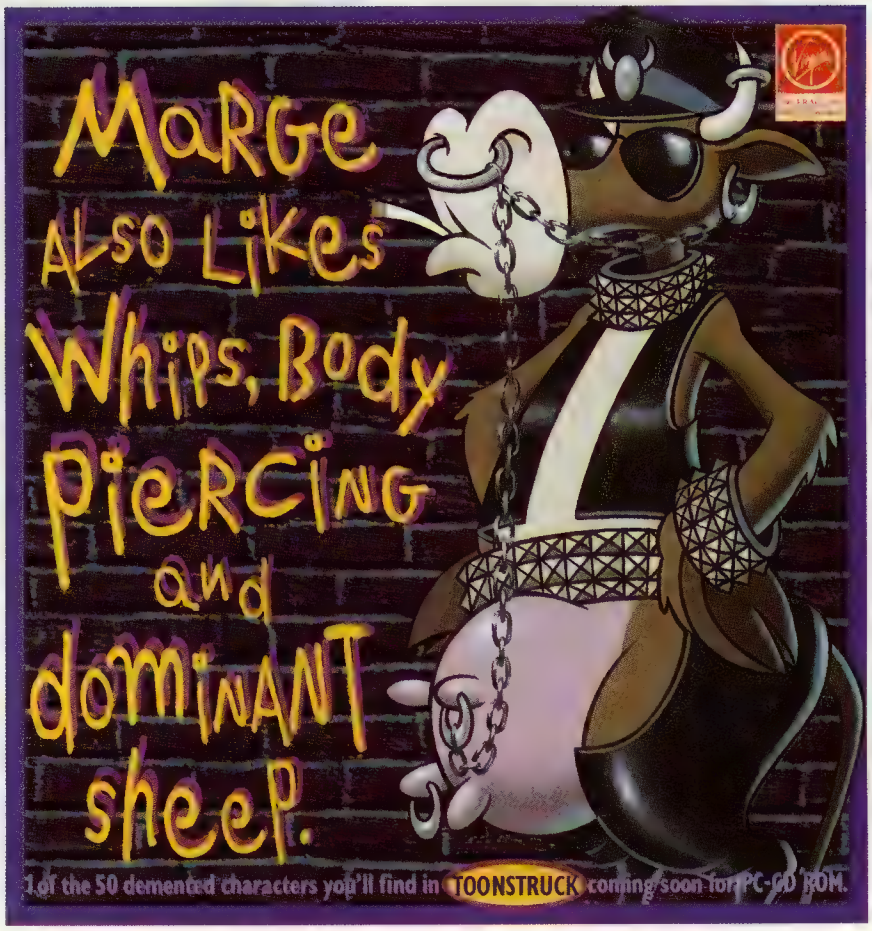
HINT

Keep in mind that you can break all kinds of things in *Hexen*. Look out for clay jars, and smash them when you can; they often contain helpful items. The same goes for those pretty stained-glass windows — they can hide items or even secret passageways. Be prepared, though — you could uncover a hungry monster!

When you start a new game of *Hexen: Beyond Heretic*, you can choose whether to play as the warrior, wizard, or cleric. Each has his own special abilities and weapons: the warrior is the toughest, hacking and pounding at foes with close-in attacks; the wizard is weaker, but has long-range magical weapons attacks that will hammer the enemy down; and the cleric, a balance of warrior and wizard, uses a combination of hand-to-hand weapons and long-range spells.

Whichever hero you choose, the controls are the same. The keyboard commands are exactly like those in *Heretic*, but if you haven't played that game (and why the heck haven't you?), here's a brief rundown: The cursor keys let you turn and move backward and forward. Pressing the Control key lets loose with whatever weapon you have ready. You select the different weapons you've picked up by tapping the numbers keys, 1 through 6. Use the Alt key to "strafe;" hold it down while pressing the left or right cursor keys to sidestep in that direction without turning away from your target. Holding down the Shift key while pressing the up or down arrows will make you run backward or forward. Press Escape to access the main menu, where you can configure play options and save or load games.

This four-level demo will give you a taste of the full product; multi-player support is even included, so you can try out the online possibilities with your buddies. *Heretic* may have had the Morph Ovum, but there's nothing better than turning an online enemy into a cute little pig with *Hexen*'s Porkalator.



Product Information Number 175

HardBall 5

Company: Accolade
Tech Support: (408) 296-8400
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sport Sim
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space (optional); SVGA; Mouse
Install: \HB5DEMO\DEMO\HB5DEMO.EXE

Batter up! Accolade, known for their award-winning *HardBall* series of baseball simulations, serves up another heaping helping of baseball goodness. You can pick the teams, change the stats, trade the players, adjust positions and line-ups, and even create you own teams. Combining arcade baseball action with statistical depth, *HardBall 5* can make you both a batting pro and a supreme manager. And with none other than Al Michaels giving the play-by-play commentary, you'll start wondering where the hot-dog vendor is!

In this demo, you'll try your skills against the computer for two full innings in an exhibition game. Whether you're batting or pitching, the controls are the same, and they're simple enough: A box will appear with several options in it.

HINT

Getting the timing right when you're batting can be a frustrating ordeal at first. To get some practice at it before continually striking out, warm up in the Homerun Derby. You'll be able to swing at pitch after pitch until you get the hang of it. Just watch those fastballs — they can sneak up on ya!



In the full version of the game, you'll be able to choose the teams you want to play.

Press the appropriate cursor key to select the swing or pitch you want to use, and confirm your choice by pressing Enter (if there's a box next to the option instead of an arrow, that means you just have to push Enter). If you are using a joystick or a gamepad (which we recommend), the stick and fire buttons correspond to the cursor keys and Enter.

Swing your bat by pressing Enter. Timing is the key ingredient, of course, so you may need to practice a bit before you're hitting them into the cheap seats. If you hit the ball, your batter will automatically run for first base. The arrow keys correspond to the bases — for example, to make a hit a double, press the up arrow key to make your runner go to second base. Press the left arrow key to go to third, and the down arrow to go home. During your next at-bat, your runners on base will automatically lead off. To increase the lead, press the arrow key in the direction of the next base. To steal, press the arrow key that corresponds to the base you want to grab, and hit the Backspace key (or Button 2 on the joystick) when the pitcher throws the ball.

Pitching is similar to batting; first, select the pitch you want to throw. To throw it, press Enter. You'll see a box appear with white crosshairs in the middle of it. You can control the general location of your pitch by moving to crosshairs with the arrow keys. There's no guarantee that your pitch will land where you want it, just as in real life — but you'll be able to throw to the inside and outside corners of the strike zone. You can pick off a runner who's trying for a steal by pressing the cursor key corresponding to the base and hitting Enter. When the batter hits the ball, fielding is accomplished by directing the controlled player — usually the one nearest the ball — with the arrow keys. If it is a fly ball, you'll see a white target on the ground where it will land, and you can direct your player to that location to catch it. You can throw the ball to a base by pressing the cursor key in the correct direction and hitting Enter.

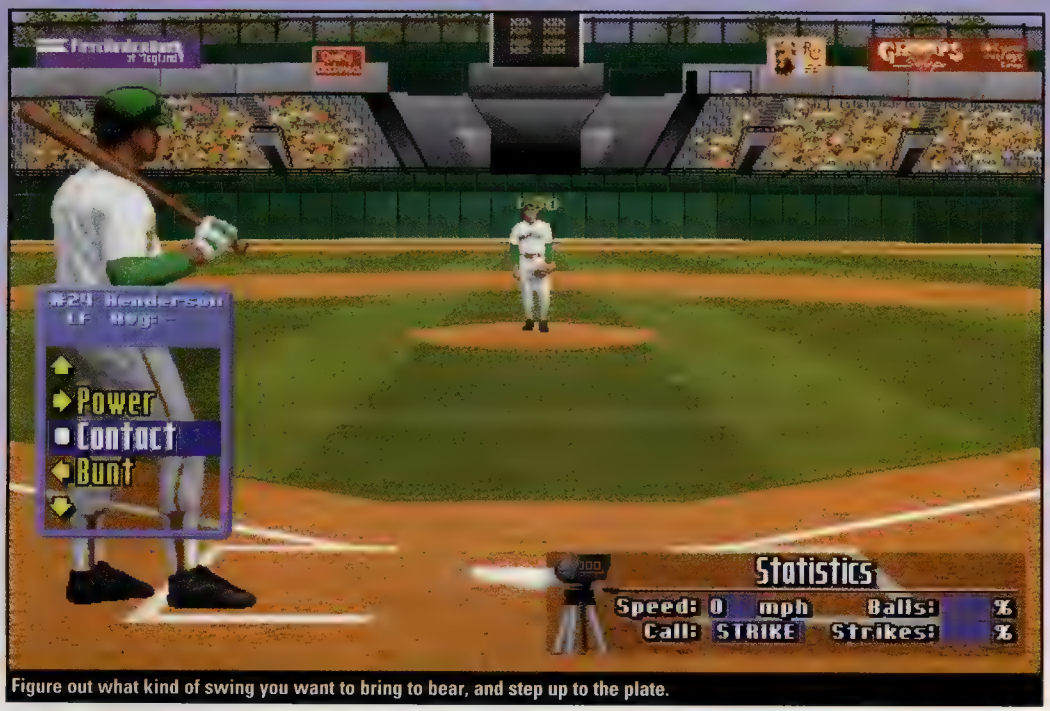


Figure out what kind of swing you want to bring to bear, and step up to the plate.



WING COMMANDER IV

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

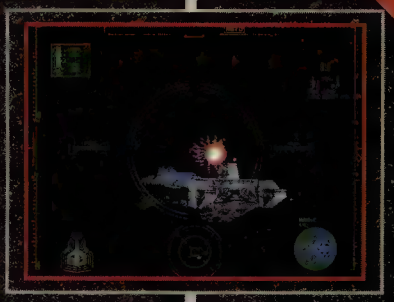
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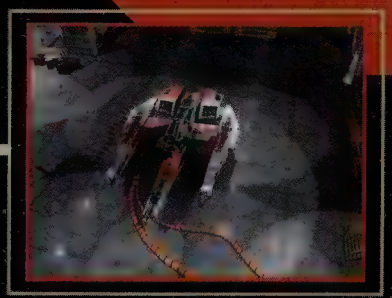




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Product Information Number 138



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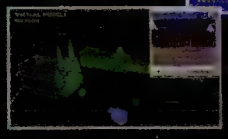
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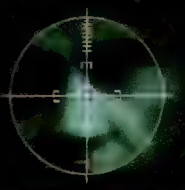
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Product Information Number 89

The Incredible Machine Version 3.0

Company: Sierra On-Line
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space, SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \TIM30\SETUP.EXE

Professor Tim is back with more wild and witty gadgets that could stump Rube Goldberg himself. *The Incredible Machine Version 3.0* is the latest installment of the perplexing puzzlers presented by the prestigious Professor. Using a variety of items, from rubber bands to laser guns, you can accomplish various mundane tasks like turning on a light, popping a balloon, or even feeding a pet mouse. It may sound simple, but believe us, it's not. The demo will give you five levels to test your mettle; the full version will challenge you with more than a hundred. You'll also be able to design your own puzzles in the professor's workshop to challenge your friends, and play head-to-head in a contest of wit and speed.

The interface is a lot simpler than the machines you'll be building. When you start the demo, select the first box on the left to begin solving puzzles. To use an object, left-click on it in the tool window, and bring it out to the playing area. Click again to drop it where you want it. There'll be several icons surrounding the item — use these to put it back in the tool window (the garbage can), rotate it into various positions (the circular arrows), or display the name and uses of the item (the magnifying glass). Once you've place the items and aligned them where you like, click on the green flag button at the top right of the screen to set your machine in motion.

If you accomplish the tasks set before you, you'll soon see a box signaling your victory, and you'll have the option to continue working your way through the puzzles.

Good luck. And be sure to keep this in mind: just because you're given several different items in the tool window doesn't mean you have to use them all to solve the puzzle!

JUST FOR FUN

There can be several different solutions to the same puzzle. See how many different ways you can solve the same problem. In the fourth puzzle of the demo, we managed to find six distinctive ways to feed Newton the Mouse. Here's an example of two completely different solutions to the second challenge in the demo.



Advanced Civilization

Company: Avalon Hill
Tech Support: (410) 254-9200
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 4.5MB hard-drive space; Mouse
Install: \ACIVDEMO\ACIV.EXE

Long before Sid Meier came out with *Civilization*, there was *Advanced Civilization*, the boardgame from Avalon Hill that not only required intense strategy to win, but took about 6 to 8 hours to play — and that was if you could get at least four of your buddies to play with you. Now it's available as a computer game, and it's got all the fun and playability of its predecessor.

The goal of the game is exactly the same — expand your realm and build up your cities to gain technologies, known as Tools, to win the game. You'll be able to play more than half of a full game, so you'll get a good idea of what *Advanced Civilization* is all about.

HINT

Each territory has a small number in a circle near it — that is the maximum number of units allowed. If you exceed the limit, you'll lose the excess markers. Make sure you don't overcrowd an area — unless you are building a city, which takes at least six in a territory with a red square in it.

To start off, you'll have a population marker. Place it in the territory of your choice. When your turn comes around, your population will double. Keep moving markers to carve out an empire for yourself — if you have markers in the same territory as an opponent, a battle will ensue and markers will be removed. When you have a large enough population, you can build a city. Do this by placing six markers in the same area as one of the dark red squares you'll see scattered over the map. Once you have a city, you can start researching technologies and moving up through the evolutionary scale.

Trading will play a major role as you find new Tools and trade them with other countries. They take the form of cards, and when you trade, you have to do it in sets of three. You only have to be honest about two of the three cards, however, so you can use trades to get rid of calamities like floods and famine.

You'll have the chance to build ships to go across the seas, and when you discover astronomy, you'll be able to go even further. As long as you keep ahead of the competition in finding new technologies and gaining more Tools, you'll be a winner. At the end of the demo, you'll see a scoreboard rating your progress compared to the seven other computer opponents.



You'll be able to move your units and watch your computer opponent move his from this main screen.

It takes a lot of strategy and ingenuity to keep ahead of the computerized players. Make sure you expand quickly and trade wisely. It's only a few short steps between the Stone Age and the Industrial Age, but you'll have to be an intelligent leader to get your people there.

Lion

Company: Sanctuary Woods
Tech Support: (303) 339-7114
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Simulation
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \LIONDEMO\SETUP.EXE

When Sanctuary Woods came out with their innovative wildlife simulation, *Wolf*, it was the first of its kind in the market. Now, what *Wolf* did for lupine life, *Lion* does for our African feline friends. *Lion* puts you in the role of one of these majestic creatures, and your job will be theirs — find food and water, survive, and reproduce.

This demo will give you an example of the simulation mode of the full game. You'll be able to form a pride (a large family) of lions to control, and your main job will be to hunt and survive. There'll be plenty of poachers, so beware. In the full version, you'll also be able to play twenty different scenarios, from hunting game for your cubs to finding a suitable mate.

You control your lion with the mouse. Move the mouse to make the lion walk or run in the direction the cursor is pointing. The further from the lion the cursor is, the faster the lion will go.

There are several ways to look at your environment. If you right-click the mouse or hit the spacebar, the cursor will enter the control bar at the bottom of the screen. From here, you can click on the lion portrait to use the lion's senses — click on the ears to listen, the eyes to see in the direction it's facing, the nose to smell the scents in the air, and the mouth to eat or drink (hold down the mouse key and you'll have the choice between eating, drinking, and roaring). You can also switch to other members of your pride by clicking on the portraits of the other lions.



As you wander, be sure to use your senses to locate food and possible danger.

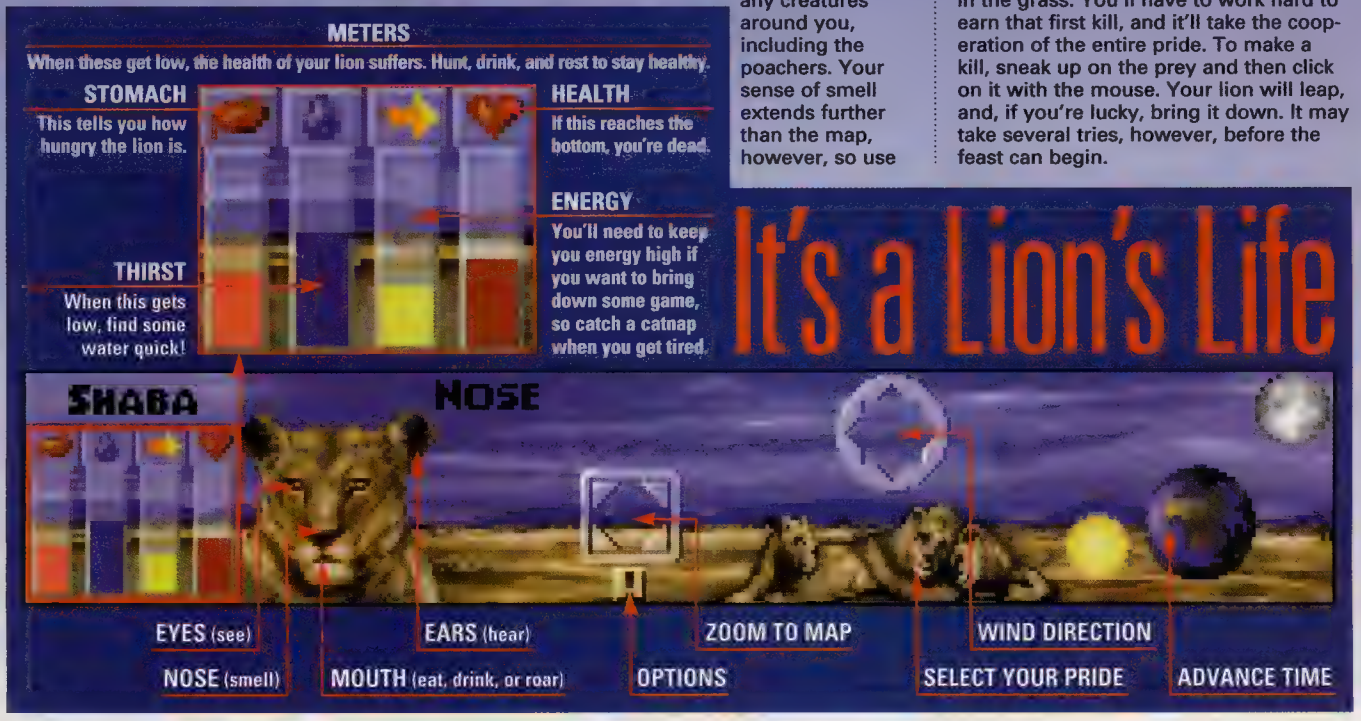
The handiest way of viewing your surroundings, however, is by using the map. Click in the box in the control bar or hit the Z key to see your surroundings. The highlighted lion is the one you currently control, and you'll see any creatures around you, including the poachers. Your sense of smell extends further than the map, however, so use it often when looking for prey.



The map will be invaluable in locating your prey, as well as fellow pride members and dangerous human.

The life of a lion isn't all lounging in the grass. You'll have to work hard to earn that first kill, and it'll take the cooperation of the entire pride. To make a kill, sneak up on the prey and then click on it with the mouse. Your lion will leap, and, if you're lucky, bring it down. It may take several tries, however, before the feast can begin.

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Product Information Number 153



Silent Thunder

Win95

Company: Sierra On-Line
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: May
Category: Air Combat Sim
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 18MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \SILENT\SETUP.EXE

Sierra is currently working on a simulation of the A-10 Thunderbolt II jet, a craft built for air-to-ground attacks, and we've managed to get our hands on a demo so our readers can have a sneak peek at this impressive new title. Along with some incredible graphics and a fantastically accurate flight model — all running under Windows 95 — it could be one of the best air combat sims to come out for quite some time.

This demo was taken from a very early beta version of *Silent Thunder*, so if you have anything less than a Pentium with 16 megabytes of RAM, the demo will crawl on your system. But Sierra promises the full product will have a much better frame rate and should run with a 486/66 and 8MB RAM.

There's not a lot of documentation to go along with the demo, but a few essential keyboard controls will get you through. You can toggle a map of the area by hitting "M." You fire your cannon with the spacebar and control your movement with the arrow keys (since this is such an early version, there's a bug in the joystick driver that causes the plane to roll left when the joystick is pushed up — we suggest you stick to the keyboard).



Even the explosions are beautiful in Sierra's newest flight sim.

CHALLENGE

Things happen pretty quickly in this demo; the object is to take out the armored convoy that's directly below you when you start the game. If you can manage that, you're one heck of a pilot.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

Win95

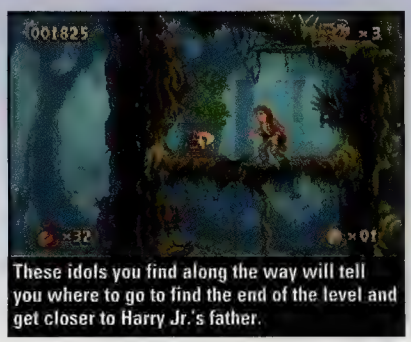
Company: Activision
Tech Support: (310) 479-5644
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; 486/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA
Install: \PITSTART.EXE

Long ago, Activision's *Pitfall* was one of the biggest hits on the Atari 2600. Now, Pitfall Harry returns, but this time he's been captured by the evil warrior spirit Zakelua, and it'll take the courage and daring of his son, Harry Jr., to free him.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure is light-years away from the older version. The idea of the game is similar, however: avoid fatal obstacles and kill the creatures that get in your way.

You can control Harry Jr. with the keyboard or a gamepad. To guide him with the keyboard, check out the control keys listed in the Help menu when you run the game. The gamepad is simple to use — the directional pad gets you moving, Button 1 jumps, Button 2 fires your selected weapon, Button 3 uses your whip, and Button 4 cycles through your arsenal. Before you can use your gamepad, however, you'll need to select Preferences from the File menu and enable the joystick. You'll also be able to configure the joystick or keyboard controls to suit your tastes, as well as adjust sound and difficulty.

You'll have five minutes to explore as much of the first level as you can. There's plenty to see and do — and to avoid. Making it to the end of the first level won't be easy to do in five minutes, but once you get the hang of it, it *can* be done.



These idols you find along the way will tell you where to go to find the end of the level and get closer to Harry Jr.'s father.



EarthSiege 2 will feature some incredible graphics, as well as all the great gameplay that made the first one a hit.

EarthSiege 2

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: May
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 11MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \EARTHSGE\SETUP.EXE

When you enter the cockpit of a HERCULAN armored unit (HERC), you can feel the power at your fingertips. In *EarthSiege 2*, the Cybrids are back, and it's up to you to lead your squad to victory over the invaders, and face Prometheus, the artifically intelligent computer that started the EarthSiege Wars.

In this demo, you'll try out one of the missions of the full game. Your objective: make your way to a landing pad and destroy everything in your path. Sound easy? Well, since the demo defaults to invincibility mode, it is. But the action is so hot, you'd be dust in seconds if Sierra didn't give you super powers.

EarthSiege 2 is a little tricky to control, but you'll get the hang of it with a bit of practice. You drive your HERC with the joystick — moving it from side to side turns the legs on the HERC, and moving the stick up or down increases and decreases your speed. You can toggle the joystick from leg to turret control by hitting the Insert key. Use the T key to auto-track your current target and the Tab key to lock onto targets; it'll be a lot easier to keep pumping the enemy full of laser fire.

You can run the demo in two different resolutions — 320x240, or 640x480. If you don't have a Pentium with at least 16MB RAM, however, you should probably stick to the lower resolution. Also, if you don't already have Win95's DirectX files installed on your computer, you might need to add them. Take a look at the README.WRI file in the \EARTHSGE subdirectory on *The CD* for more information.



Full Tilt Pinball

Company: Maxis
Tech Support: (510) 927-3905
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Pinball
Required: Windows 95; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 2.2MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \PINBALL\SETUP.EXE

You've never seen pinball like Maxis' *Full Tilt Pinball*. Running exclusively under Windows 95, our demo lets you try out Space Cadet, one of the three tables included with the full version. As a space cadet, you'll need to finish training, refuel your ship, reload your weapons, and complete a number of tasks. You can see your next objective by reading the messages on the light board to the right of the table, and by looking for the blinking blue arrows that point to your next target.

Keep an eye on the circle of dots in the middle of the table; if you complete enough tasks to light the entire outer circle, you'll start on the inner dots. Light the inner circle, and the gravity well will come into effect, which is an experience you have to try to believe.

In the *Full Tilt* demo, you get to play with a single ball for as long as you can keep it on the table. Use the Z key to activate the left flipper, and the right flipper is triggered by the / key. Hold the spacebar down to pull the plunger, and let go to launch the ball. You can bump the table up, right, or left with the appropriate arrow keys.

CHALLENGE

It's difficult to get very far with only one ball to go on, but we managed to rack up a whopping 6,000,000 points! If you want to try to beat our score, you'll need to find out where to get the biggest bonus in the easiest manner.

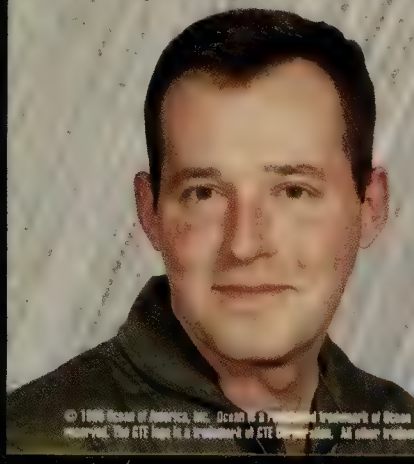


The Space Cadet table featured in this demo will pit you against the hazards of space, survivable only by placing the silver ball correctly.



"The best sim I've ever seen, it's just like being there."

— Diehard, Harrisburg, PA
ahip@aol.com



EF 2000™

FlightMaster™ Profile:

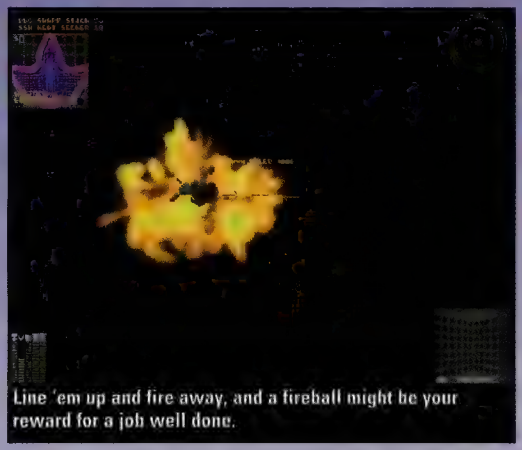
- 11 years real flight experience
- Desert Storm combat duty
- National director of Falcon 3.0 head-to-head network tournament

Take On The Best.

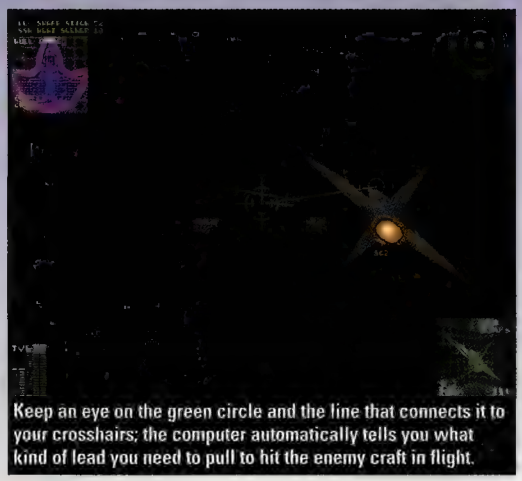
www.ef2000.com/game

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Line 'em up and fire away, and a fireball might be your reward for a job well done.



Keep an eye on the green circle and the line that connects it to your crosshairs; the computer automatically tells you what kind of lead you need to pull to hit the enemy craft in flight.

Star Rangers

Company: Interactive Magic
Tech Support: (919) 461-0948
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \SRDEMO\INSTALL.EXE

Star Rangers puts you in the role of an interstellar police officer working for law and order. It's your job to patrol the highways and byways of the galaxy in your heavily armed fighter.

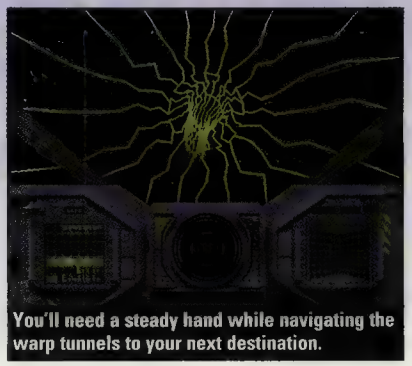
But *Star Rangers* isn't just a space combat game — you'll have to think as smartly as you fly to take out the criminals that populate space. You'll have to judge your energy reserves and decide if you should make that critical flight across the quadrant to save a sole freighter from piracy, or hold onto your reserves to take on the enemy fleet heading for a densely populated space port. Every decision you make affects the outcome of the mission. Keep your wits about you, and you may become the most decorated Ranger on the force. Make the wrong choices, and you're space dust.

In this demo, you can fly one mission of a campaign against the bad guys. You can also practice your skills in a five-minute foray against an unlimited onslaught of enemy ships. When you start the demo, you'll be in the practice session. It's timed to last five minutes, so you can either play it all the way through, or hit Escape to go to the main menu. If you elect to fly a new campaign, you'll receive a briefing on the situation and read up on your wingman. Your mission will be to take out all the enemy ships in the quadrant. When you destroy all the bad guys in your immediate area, hit M to see the navigational map. Move the mouse to the next bunch of fighters you want to take on, and click the left mouse button to choose that spot as a jump point. Then hit W to engage the warp engines, and you'll enter the warp tunnel. Steer carefully though the tunnel, and when you come out of warp you'll be near enough to more enemies to take them out. Continue doing this to destroy all the enemies on the map, but be careful you don't use up too much energy in your travels, or you might find yourself stranded in space.

Check out the keyboard commands above for how to control your ship. The demo is best played with a joystick, but you can use the cursor keys to steer your fighter.

Control Keys

Throttle Up/Down	– and +
Match Speed with Target	Enter
Target Mode	T
Front View	F1
Full Screen View	F2
Engage Warp Engines	W
View Map	M
Cycle Weapons	?
Cycle Missiles	> and <
Fire Weapons	Alt
Fire Missiles	Spacebar



You'll need a steady hand while navigating the warp tunnels to your next destination.

Vigilance on Talos V

Company: Square Wheel Studios
Tech Support: (514) 745-3123
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Platform Shooter
Required: 386; 4MB RAM; 11MB RAM; VGA
Install: \TALOSV\INSTTAL.BAT

Killian Jaraad and his daughter Colesce were traveling on a colony transport when it was attacked by the Xenos. Before his very eyes, Killian's daughter was taken from him, kicking and screaming. Somehow left alive, Killian spent years training with mercenaries in the art of killing, and has battled the Xenos ever since in revenge for the loss of Colesce. Recently, another mercenary, known only as E. Red, told Killian of a planet where the Xenos took their human slaves. Hoping to one day be reunited with his daughter, Killian decided to find to the planet. So begins *Vigilance on Talos V.*

Vigilance is a pretty standard platform shooter. You control Killian with the cursor keys. To fire your weapon, press the Alt key. Press Control to jump. When you start gathering items, such as missiles, you can use them by pressing the spacebar to switch to Item mode and pressing the Alt key. Your life is measured in energy — if it reaches zero, you're dead. You can gather energy units, supplies for you weapons, and special items in certain places along the way, or you can get them from the creatures you kill. You'll max out at 99 points of power to start, but you can find additional reserve tanks to build up your limit. Save your game in a savegame pod — when you find one, step into it and press the up arrow. You have five slots to choose from. There are also transporters, such as the one at the very beginning, that will move you to another part of the level.

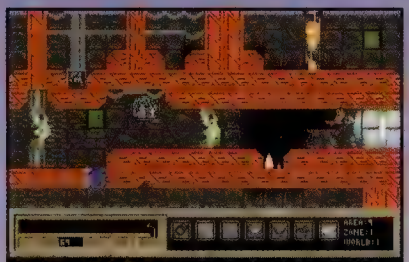
Check out the file called MANUAL.TXT for a list of the special items you can find on the way, like the Saturn Ball and Jump Boots. You'll also learn about some other tricks that are handy to know while exploring the world of Talos V.



You'll need to find the Grapple Hook before you can make use of these blocks. As with many elements in *Talos V*, you'll have to work on your timing before you can use it effectively.



Whenever you find these savegame pods, use them. There are a lot of creatures out for blood on the planet Talos V.



At the end of this corridor is the Saturn Ball. You'll need to shoot these electrical barriers before you can continue on your way.

HINT

At the very beginning, there are going to be plenty of places where you'll need the Saturn Ball to get through. With it, you'll be able to turn into a spinning ball with a touch of the down arrow key. To find it, immediately take the first transporter you see when you start the game. Then you'll need to move to the room on the right. You'll have to make your way upwards via some platforms that move when you land on them. It's difficult to get the hang of it at first, but once you get the timing, it's no problem. Once you make it to the top, go through the door to the left, and make your way left to the end of the corridor. You'll need to shoot the energy beams that block your way. When you make it to the end, just jump and land on the ball icon, and you'll be squeezing through tunnels with the click of the keyboard key.



INTERACTIVE MAGIC PRESENTS

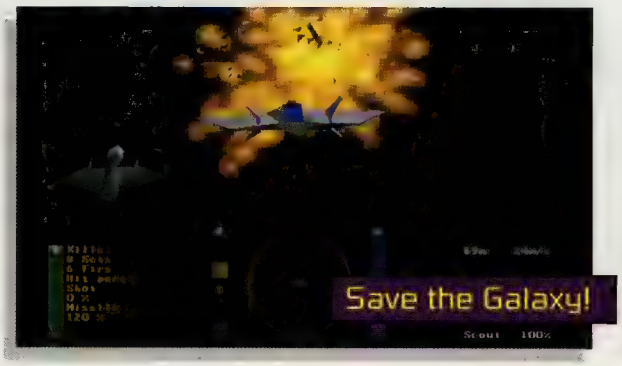
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- ***You're thrust into one life or death mission after another*** *and you've got quick decisions to make. You can hyper-space across the galaxy to protect a distant base . . . but will you have enough fuel to return to protect the closer ones? And how many enemy ships are attacking your other bases? Can you get there in time?*
- ***A detailed galactic map helps you ID enemy strength and positions,*** *as well as navigate through the galaxy to engage the enemy in one heart-pounding battle after another. But in Star Rangers, you've got to shoot straight and think smart. The citizens are looking for a hero . . .could it be you?*









PC CD-ROM

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INTERACTIVE MAGIC

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Product Information Number 121

Space Bucks

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Space Trading Game
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \SBUCKS\SETUP.EXE

Civilization has finally discovered faster-than-light technology, a find that allows contact with alien life forms. With the new contacts come new business and an environment rich with opportunity for a budding entrepreneur. It's into this ripe climate that you step as a beginning businessman, and your job is to expand your business to all reaches of the galaxy though trade and negotiation with other planets. As the CEO of one of five major companies, you'll need to watch supply and demand carefully, bargain wisely with planets for landing rights, and earn profit with productive trade. Keep an eye on your competitors, though; the winner is the one who accumulates the highest company value.

You start this ten-year demo with a single ship on a single planet. It's from this meager beginning that you can build an empire that would put Bill Gates to shame. You'll need to start by bidding for landing rights on a nearby planet. Then you'll set up a profitable trade route. Once the money starts rolling in, you can buy more ships, bargain for other planets, or build your own spaceport to increase the quality of trade.

Since your ship is not terribly advanced, you won't be able to travel far, so you'll have to find a nearby planet to trade with. Each planet's name is displayed in a certain color that indicates which company currently owns it (your color in this demo is red). Planets with gray names are up for bid; if the name is purple, that means a rival company has put in a bid for landing rights on it. Find a nearby planet and select it, then hit the negotiation button. Click on Submit to start bidding, and soon the name of the planet will change from gray to purple to red. Then you can start trading.

To set up a trade route, click on the Build Route button, then click on the starting planet, then on the planet you want to trade with. Finally, click on Accept Route. Once that is accomplished, you'll see your ship traveling from system to system.

You'll be able to tell what each button does by looking at the information bar at the bottom of the screen whenever you place your mouse over a button. For a full tutorial, print out and read the README.WRI file in the \SBUCKS directory on the CD-ROM. For the best results, open it in Windows Write, the word processor that comes with Windows.

TECHNICAL NOTE: *Space Bucks* is pretty demanding on system resources. If the demo doesn't load after installation through our front end program, you may have to run it by itself from Windows. Just exit to Windows and double-click the *Space Bucks* icon in the Sierra folder.



Part of wise trade is configuring your ship to carry the most of a profitable cargo.

HINT

Ten years is a short time to build a profitable business. To utilize your time more efficiently, hit the P key to pause the game. You'll still be able to do management tasks, such as building trade routes and configuring cargo holds for your ships, but you won't be using valuable time until you're ready for things to start moving again.



The Main Screen is where you'll accomplish most of your tasks.

DEADHEAD:
Bad to the Bone.



In the war of the Gearheads, this guy's M.O. is dead simple: Scare the other toys silly.

Hey, no problem. One glimpse of that fiendish skull, bulging, bloodshot eyes, cracked cranium and clattering jaw and what would you do-introduce him to your sister?

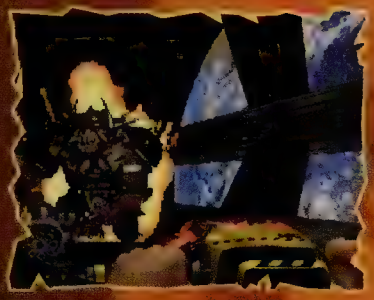
gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys

PHILIPS

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"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - DOOM included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

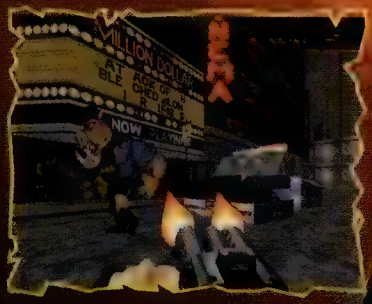
"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus



FULL MOVEMENT CONTROL lets you run, jump, crawl, swim, and jetpack your way thru hostile environments as you look up and down from any vantage point to survey the situation around you.



FANTASTIC 3D REALMS, with stunning graphics supported in optional SVGA modes, await you as you thrash sinister aliens thru the streets of L.A., out to an orbiting station, and onto the surface of the moon itself!



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DYNAMIC COMM-BAT™ features let you duke it out one-on-one via modem, and enables up to 8 player battlefests over your network. Also, send prerecorded taunts to your human opponents via Duke's unique RemoteRidicule™ system.

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DUKE NUKEM 3D

FormGen INCORPORATED

Recommended for Mature Players: Violence · Adult Themes

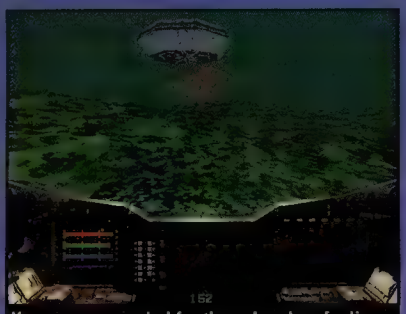
Developed by 3D Realms Entertainment

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WWW Site (http://www.3drealms.com) CIS (Keyword REALMS) Software Creations BBS (508) 368-7036

3D REALMS
REALITY IS OUR GAME.™

Product Information Number 112



Keep an eye peeled for these handy refueling stations. They'll save your life, especially later on in the mission.

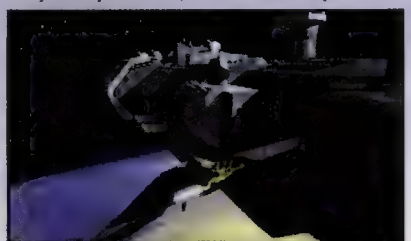
Shockwave Assault

Company: Electronic Arts
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; VLB Video
Install: \SW_DEMO\AUTORUN.EXE

Aliens are invading Earth, and the only people who can stop them are a small group of fighter pilots in orbit around the planet. In a series of fifteen action-packed missions, you'll deal the aliens a death-blow, and save the world as we know it.

When the demo starts, you'll be able to see a sampling of the full-motion video *Shockwave Assault* has in store. To skip it, hit the Escape key. You'll start in the cockpit of one of the most advanced fighters the future has to offer. With it, you'll destroy hordes of alien craft and save the lives of helpless citizens in the cities below you. To control your craft, use the cursor keys for up, down, and sideways movement. The Control key will fire your laser weapons, and the Alt key launches your missiles. Hold down the Shift key to engage your turbo engines. Check out the chart below for an explanation of the readouts in your cockpit. To pause the game, hit P.

The first mission is pretty hairy, so keep an eye out for refueling drones — they'll appear as light blue dots on your radar map. And make sure you stay in the cleared pathway — if you don't, a rain of enemy fire



The beginning of the demo will give you a sneak peek into what the full-motion video will look like, as well as provide some plot line info.

Locus

Company: Zombie
Tech Support: (206) 654-7060
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 19MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \LOCUS\LOCUS.EXE

In the year 2095, a new sport has taken over as the most popular spectator event on the planet. The sport, called Locus, is simple — players riding hover-cycles try to put small red balls into the opposing teams' goals. Three teams of two players play at once, and the winner is the team that can score three times on each of the others' goals while defending their own.

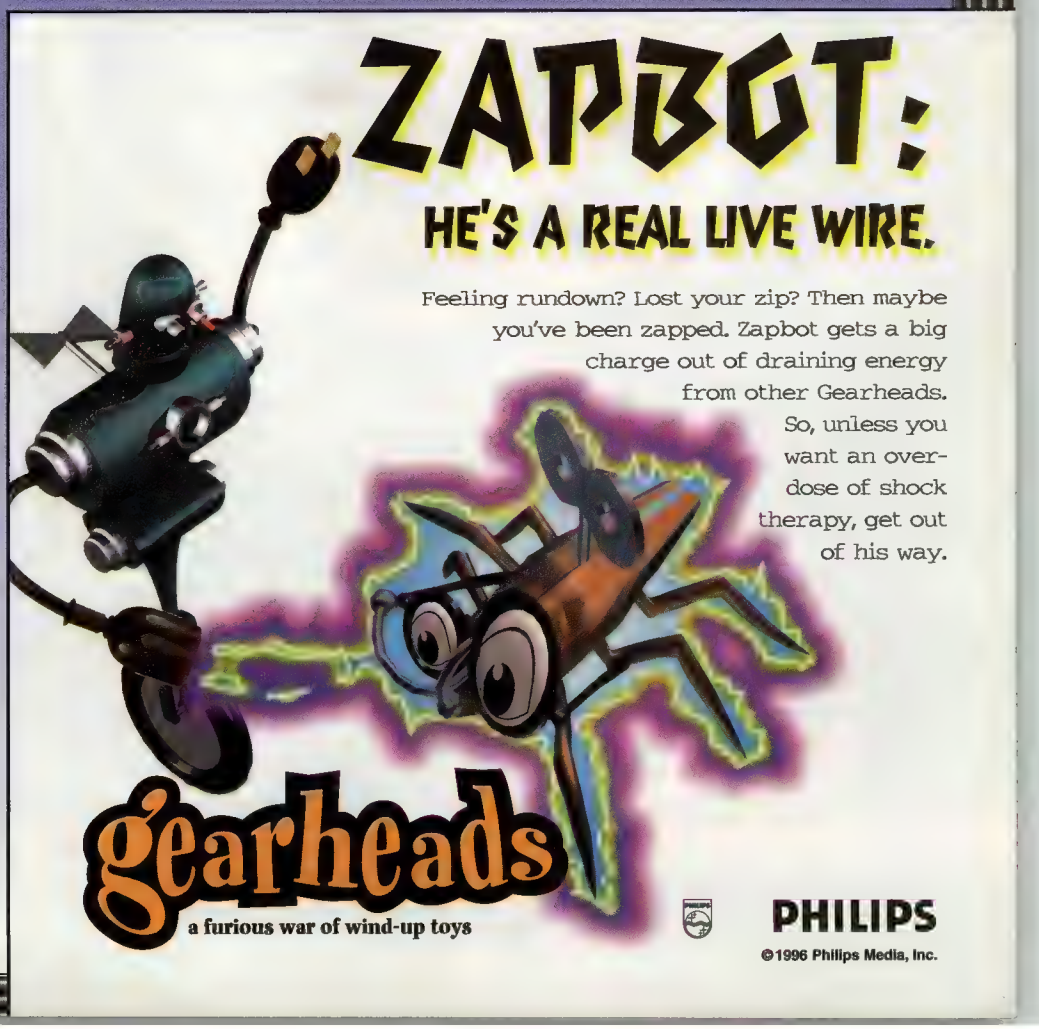
There's a lot more to *Locus* than this, however. The hover-cycles are equipped with magnetic receptacles for capturing and holding the balls. They have the ability to jump, which is handy when an opponent is trying to steal your ball from you, and they have lasers that can lash out at unsuspecting cycles that get in your way.

Each arena is unique as well, conforming to the desires of the team that builds it. In this demo, there's a gravity well that will pull you off course, and an afterblast option that will give you a burst of speed when you drive over it.

You control your cycle with the keyboard. The Z key accelerates, the A key decelerates, and the Enter key fires your lasers. Hit the Left Shift key to activate your magnet and capture the ball, and press the Spacebar to jump. Turn your cycle to the left and the right with the "[" and "]" keys, respectively. You can also look around without changing your direction of travel by using the cursor keys. You can reconfigure all these keys to your liking in the Options menu.



Once you've got the ball, make your way to the nearest goal. If you're not quick enough, an opponent may steal the ball away.

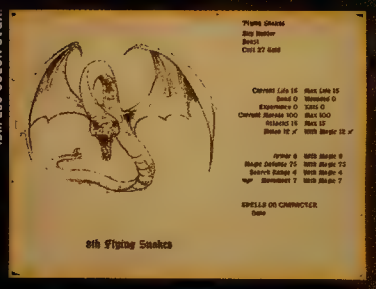


FANTASY GENERAL

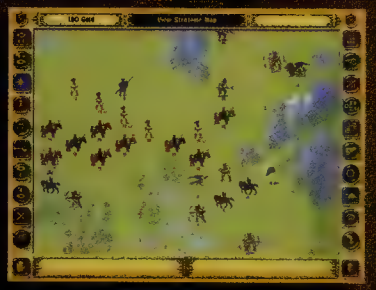
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IBM 256-COLOR SVGA



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For Game Rating info, call 1-800-771-3772

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Black Knight

Company: FormGen Inc.
Tech Support: (602) 443-4109
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Flight Sim
Required: 386/33; 8MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \BKNIGHT\INSTBK.BAT

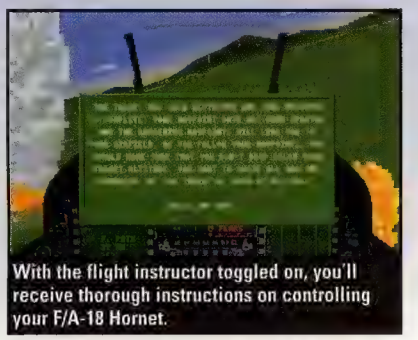
FormGen has teamed up with S.E. Software to bring us a realistic flight sim centered on the F/A-18 Hornet, the advanced Marine strike fighter. You'll be able to use some of the most technologically impressive weapons that have seen action, from television-guided missiles to the smart bombs that were used in Desert Storm.

This demo will let you fly several training and combat missions from more than fifty in the full version. You can test your skill using different air-to-air weapons as well as those for air-to-ground attacks. There's training for take-off and landing the craft, and enough flight instruction to make even the most avid computer flight jockey learn something new.

When you first load the demo, the training options will be set to invincible and unlimited weapons, to help you get the hang of flight (you can turn these aids off by accessing the Configuration menu). You'll receive instruction on how to fly the craft, including keyboard commands, as you fly.

The flight instructor will tell you many things, from the most effective angle for climbing, to which buttons to push to activate a myriad of computer controlled readouts. Once you figure out how to perform the various actions, you can shut off the automatic flight instructor from the Configuration menu

The full version of *Black Knight* also will let you perform unlimited free-flights for practice, build you own missions, and use a flight recorder to replay your glorious victories over and over. You can check out the flight recorder in the demo by playing back the opening flight sequence. *Black Knight* may not be the prettiest flight sim out there, but the designers have put a lot of effort into the realism. And it will even run on old 386 machines, so if you've been waiting for a flight sim that will run on your old workhorse, check it out.



With the flight instructor toggled on, you'll receive thorough instructions on controlling your F/A-18 Hornet.

Another Day at the Office



DISASTEROID:
Loves to kick asteroid.

Whenever Gearheads battle, Disasteroid is always laser hot. So, if you need someone to hack holes in your opponent's defenses, Disasteroid's the guy.

gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys

PHILIPS

Product Information Number 139

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Add-Ons & Patches

As the Ides of March pass us by, and we've gorged on all the Valentine's Day candy we could find on sale after February 14, it's nice to know that we can always rely on dedicated gamers out there to provide us with even more hours of enjoyment by creating add-ons for our favorite games.



They said it wasn't possible, but the author of HEROES.WAD managed to create a free-standing cross. Don't ask how he did it — we don't know.

This month, we've got a whopper of a WAD from the author of last month's EVILDOG.WAD for *Doom II*. The title of this one is HEROES.WAD, and it's a complete, 36-level replacement for the levels in *Ultimate Doom*. A compilation of some of the best WADs out there, this is one of the most impressive add-ons we've loaded up. Unfortunately, if you don't have *Ultimate Doom*, you'll only get access to the first 27 levels (three episodes) — and most of the best stuff is in the last episode.

For you *Doom II* fans, there's "Mountain King," a WAD built for Deathmatch, which uses a Capture-the-Flag concept to make things interesting. If you're into *Doom*ing with your buddies, this one is a must. And check out TOWNHOUS.WAD, one of the most detailed single-level WADs we've seen.

Of course, we'd be remiss if we didn't include some killer *Heretic*, *Descent*, and *Hexen* levels. We've got FLENZER2.WAD and LAVALORD.WAD for *Heretic*, plus the Deathmatch levels, ELEMENTS.WAD and THESWAMP.WAD, for *Hexen*. You'll explore asteroids in "Creeping Death" for *Descent*, as well as swarms of robots in "Meridian."

We've also got more custom save games for *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*. In "Battle Between 2 Towns," you'll have to think strategically and utilize passageways to overcome the Human influence. Another interesting save game is "Megatropolis;" it's one of the biggest towns we've ever seen in *Warcraft*!

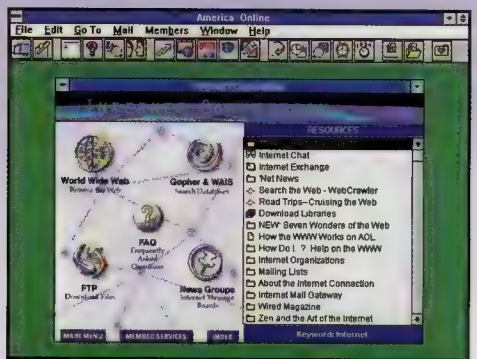
Check out the README.TXT file in each subdirectory if you don't know how to use these add-ons. Each game has its own subdirectory, so, for example, if you're looking to load the HEROES.WAD, look in the \DOOM subdirectory on the CD-ROM.

We've also got all of the patches mentioned in the Extended Play column on page 149. They're in the \PATCHES subdirectory. Please note that you may need to use the program PKZIP to unpack files with the .ZIP extension. A shareware version of this program can be downloaded from virtually any BBS or online service, or purchased at many software stores.

America Online

Company: America Online
Phone: (800) 827-3338
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Online Service
Required: 386; 4MB RAM; VGA; Mouse; Modem; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

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In *The CD*'s cover sleeve this month, you'll find an account number and password. All you need to do to get yourself up and running is to open Windows and select Run from the File Menu. Type "D:\AOL\SETUP," where "D" is the name of your CD-ROM drive. The setup program will then walk you through creating a new account on the fastest growing online service in the industry.

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ATTENTION
Pinball Illusions Contestants!

Back in October, we featured 21st Century's *Pinball Illusions* demo and contest. The folks at 21st Century challenged our readers to send in their top scores — verified by a special code — to find out just who the reigning pinball wizards were. The deadline has passed as we go to press, so we can finally announce the names of the five PC gamers who won the contest and a complete library of 21st Century games. Every one of the winners scored well over *1 billion* points. These guys sure play a mean pinball!

Jimmy Brumble — Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Frederick Cook — Port Hope, Ontario
LeeRoy Cox — American Falls, Idaho
Brad Leonard — Waterloo, New York
Tom Snyder — Amherst, New York

If Nothing Works...

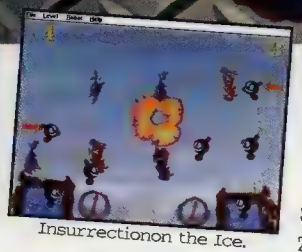
We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Should your copy fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address for replacement: *PC Gamer, The March CD Disc 2.2 Replacement, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005*. Please indicate any error message you receive.

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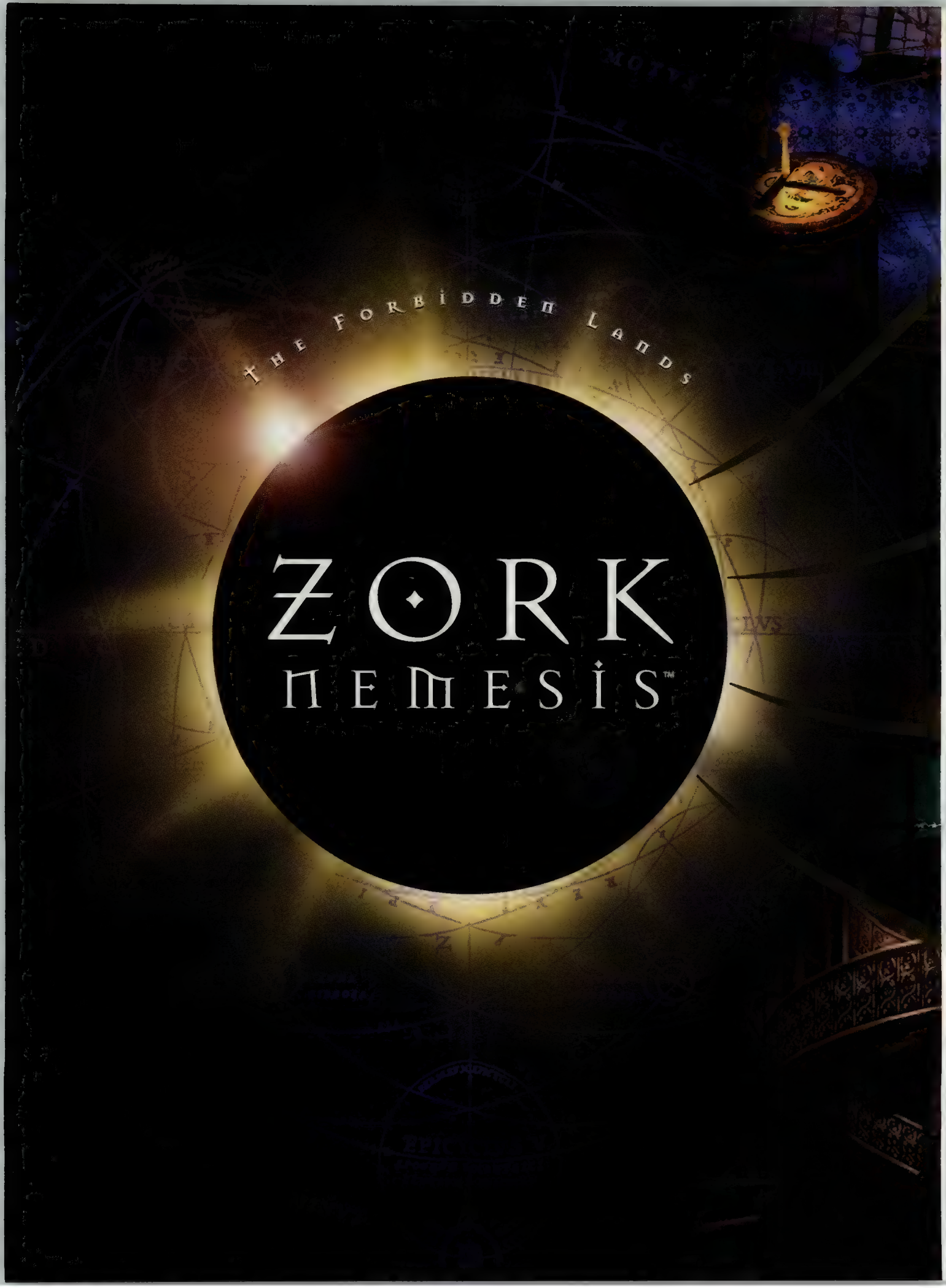
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Product Information Number 90

Afterlife

OK, boys and girls, can you spell "eschatology"*?

You've been playing God for years in games like *SimCity*, *Populous*, and *Civilization*. Now LucasArts gives you power over Heaven and Hell in the ultimate god-game.

—William R. Trotter



As in any good simulation game, disasters must be coped with in a speedy manner. But what should you do when Hell freezes over?

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Afterlife
Developer: Mike Stemmle
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800)782-7927
Projected price: TBA
Percentage complete: 60%

In a nutshell:

Looking for a new and interesting career? What if you got a job as Manager of Heaven and Hell? On one hand, you've got people who must be made happy; on the other, you've got folks who deserve misery.

What's so special?

Afterlife is the newest creation from the twisted mind of Mike Stemmle, whose previous off-the-wall game, *Sam and Max Hit the Road*, was one of the zaniest, most original games since the dawn of PC entertainment.

Why should I care?

Well, where do *you* want your soul to go when you die? *Is* there a more profound existential question? Is there a more fecund topic for absurdist, surreal, gaming dementia? Would Bill Gates go to Heaven or to Hell? And what would you do with him when he arrived? (Think hard before answering...He may be listening.)

And when's it coming out?

Late first quarter, 1996

*e*schatology: *-n., branch of theology which deals with the final end of man and of the universe, from the Greek eschatos, last, + logos, word.*

The deadlines roll by; games come and games go; what pushes the envelope one year is fodder for the bargain bins the next — yes, dear readers, after eight years of reviewing PC games, it all tends to become a kind of blurry continuum.

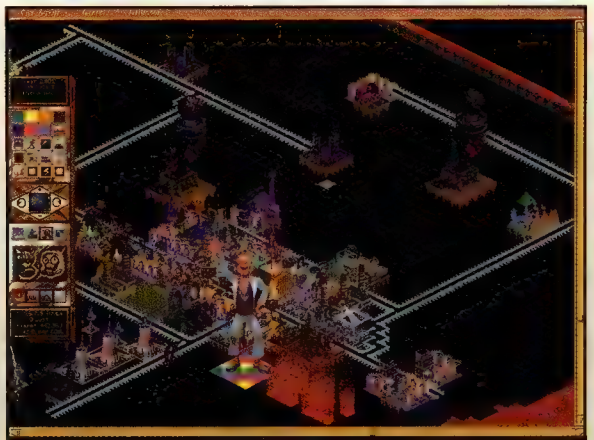
But there are landmark occasions that stick in the memory; days when I got my first look at something and knew, just *knew*, that the industry would never be the same again.

One such occasion was the day a friend of mine — a confirmed Macintosh loyalist — asked me to come take a look at "something really weird and wonderful." When I arrived, he booted up a new program called *Sim City*, and I watched, spellbound, as he click-clicked and created a city from nothingness, a customized urban dreamscape whose roads were soon thronged with tiny "Sims" going about their business.

And I knew things would never be the same in the gaming industry. It was like watching the birth of a new star system: I knew there would soon be plenty of planets orbiting this conceptual sun. I went away that day thinking: "My God, consider the possibilities!"



Want an afterlife of fantasy fulfillment? Just throw the Dream-a-Dice...



A typical zone in Hell looks rather like a surrealist version of Las Vegas (or is that redundant?).

Thus was a genre born, and it thrives to this day. We have transportation sims, farming sims, island sims, Roman Empire sims, theme park sims — something for every taste.

Well, *almost* every taste. One thing all the existing sim games share is the fact that they are grounded in what we mortals comfortably refer to as "reality." And "reality" carries with it the baggage of built-in assumptions and "common sense" rules: "don't put your nuclear power plants in the middle of a residential zone," or "railroad lines work better if they go *around*, not over, mountain ranges."

But what if the player were plunked down in a "simulation" of an environment that has no provable basis in "reality"? A realm that until now has been the province of theologians, philosophers, and poets? A realm where "the rules" were not known beforehand?

In the new LucasArts simulation, *Afterlife*, the player finds him or herself in charge of the Great Beyond, the proverbial "Undiscovered Countries" of Heaven and Hell. You are given the job of Regional Manager of two distinct planes of the hereafter, both of which float in a void on your computer screen, above and below the alien world whose inhabitants will provide the raw material, in the form of millions and millions of souls.

Your task is to accommodate the needs — punishments or rewards, depending on the belief held by the individual soul — of all those wandering souls. Efficiently manage the happiness of one plane and the condign misery of the other, along with the karmic transportation of migrating souls, and you'll be rewarded with funds in the form of (wait for it!) "Pennies from Heaven." If you fail to meet the afterlife needs of your two populations, or if you can't cope with the natural disasters and rebellions that may occur, well, everything just goes to hell rather quickly. (Sorry, but the puns come built into the game; there is No Escape!)

Your employers are mysterious offscreen entities known only as "The Powers That Be," and even though you don't often see Them, or even know They're there, They keep careful tabs on your job performance.

So what's a typical Day at the Office for the Regional Manager of Heaven and Hell? Well, you have to greet the new arrivals, tally up their good and bad deeds, and decide which plane to send them to — interestingly, the individual soul's beliefs and expectations figure into the process as much as, if not more than, simple naughty-and-nice calculations. If a soul *expects* to go to Hell, but has really not led a bad life, that soul may actually become a dangerous malcontent if assigned to Heaven.



Welcome to the Disco Inferno, where the leisure suit *never* goes out of fashion!

Some of the arriving souls will believe in reincarnation, so you'll have to build a transportation network to move them efficiently to the various "Karma Stations," where they can await their transubstantiation contentedly. Many of the arriving souls will be genial, forgiving types who believe that *everybody* ends up in Heaven, so you'll have to make sure there's

Master of Heaven and Earth

A chat with Mike Stemmle

In contrast to so many of the seemingly committee-designed games coming onto the market, *Afterlife* is a very personal creation — though admittedly it is backed by all the formidable expertise and market-clout of LucasArts — so *PCG* went directly to the source, Project Leader Mike Stemmle, to find out What's Going On.

Not unexpectedly, Mike's comments did not make for a typical cut-and-dried interview:

PCG: This sounds like the zaniest game to come along since *Sam and Max*...

M.S.: "Zany" is one word, but I think "warped" is more appropriate.

PCG: How did the inspiration come to you?

M.S.: I guess it started a few years ago, when a bunch of us were sitting around taking pot-shots at "edutainment" software, and we started riffing on the *Carmen San Diego* series and how that had been milked to death, and naturally somebody suggested the title *Where in the Hell is Carmen San Diego?*

At about the same time, I decided that, after *Sam and Max*, I'd really had my fill of adventure games, and that I was starting to really enjoy *Theme Park* and *Sim City 2000*, games like that. The third factor was that I've always been a big fan of Dante's *Inferno*. At some point, all three strands of thought connected and the light bulb popped on in my head, and surprisingly enough, the company read my proposal and bit.

PCG: Is reincarnation a form of "promotion," or can you be reincarnated downward, as a centipede or something?

M.S.: I've dodged that issue. Basically, after a soul has finished its assigned time in Heaven or Hell, it goes to a "Karma Station," via the "Soul Train," of course, and they head toward these cosmic portals where they're transported to the planet where they live their next life.

The two afterlife planes are not stable places: all sorts of disasters can happen. Hell *can* freeze over. Heaven can get the blues, there's a "Disco Inferno" that occasionally rumbles through and makes a total mess of things. As you can gather, there are more puns in this game than are really safe or legal.

PCG: How did you get around the possible reaction of the religious right? I mean, you are flirting deliciously with blasphemy, here.

Continued on page 38...

"Hell can freeze over, Heaven can get the blues, there's a 'Disco Inferno' that occasionally rumbles through and makes a total mess of things. As you can gather, there are more puns in this game than are really safe or legal."

— Mike Stemmle, Afterlife project leader



An ideal punishment for Gluttony is an eternity of dining pleasure at Taco Hell. Be sure to ask for the hot sauce.

Continued from page 37...

M.S.: Yeah, that's why we set it in an alien world. But the aliens are sort of humanoid-looking, big-jawed, ping-pong-eyed, Muppet-looking creatures. I saw no point in opening the can of worms of individual religious beliefs — what matters in the game is what the alien souls believe about the afterlife, vis-à-vis their own culture.

For the same reason, we keep the God concept rather nebulous. You have overlord bosses, so to speak, but they remain aloof and offstage — you can project whatever image you're comfortable with when you're thinking about them or dealing with them.

PCG: Is there a definite goal to the game, a point at which you "win"?

M.S.: No, like most sim games, the goal is just to keep building a bigger and better afterlife, really. Now, there *are* some losing scenarios — if you bungle the job, the unnamed Powers That Be will unleash the Four Surfers of the Apocalypse and just wipe out your whole afterlife creation. Or, your planet could suffer a terminal catastrophe, and without a continual supply of fresh souls, your afterlife will just wither and die. You have to be careful not to employ more Demons and Angels than you need, because, after all, idle hands are the Devil's plaything, and they'll become unruly and start launching raids against the opposing realm. From time to time, you need to raise the wages of sin, just to keep the operation humming along.

I'd like to emphasize that we have over 200 different punishments and rewards. One of my favorites is "Taco Hell," which is a Gluttony punishment, a nice little eatery where not only are the dishes too hot to touch, but the food is scaldingly inedible. In the Heaven plane, we have the "Dream-a-Dice," where you can live out your dreams or other peoples' dreams. And then there's the "Lava Lamps of Lust," where souls get blasted into gooey lumps of matter that burn with desire but cannot actually touch each other.

PCG: So, what is it in a nutshell?

M.S.: It's the first absurdist, surrealist sim-game. It will be for Windows 95 and DOS. It will be all things to all players. And it will be perfect when it ships.

PCG: Can we quote you on that?

M.S.: If you do, you'll burn in Hell forever.



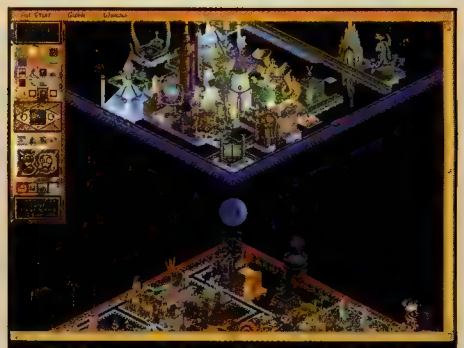
Visual as well as literary puns abound. Look closely, and you'll see an infernal variation on the McDonald's logo...

enough room. Even in the Afterlife, expansion costs money (those "wages of sin" keep going up!), so you'll have a hard time hanging on to those pennies.

With billions of souls to keep track of, *Afterlife* does not subscribe to any menu of belief-systems, other than the ones that bear directly on gameplay. Says Project Leader Mike Stemmle: "We decided early on to include both a Heaven and a Hell, firstly because everybody's heard of them, even if they don't necessarily believe in them, and secondly because a two-plane afterlife looks capital-c Cool when it's floating on your computer screen. The setup also creates a great deal of dynamic tension in the player's strategy."

There are over 250 different structures you can build, in a style that might be described as "Arabian Nights on LSD." Puns abound: "Disco Inferno," "Hellrose Place"..."this game is fat with laughs," chortled Stemmle.

Sound effects will be similarly rich (although any musical quotes from *Stairway to Heaven* were banned early in the project...even in Hell, some things are unspeakable); practically every structure and event will have its own special sound signature. "In Hell alone," said Stemmle, "we probably have twenty variations of 'screaming in abject terror.'"



Welcome to Heaven! Observe the Pearly Gates and the Key to the Kingdom.

Game development has a full head of steam, and the product should be in the stores about a month or so after this issue of *PC Gamer* hits the stands.

Afterlife may be the strangest game you'll ever play. It is a serious strategy game, with plenty of depth, about one of Humankind's most persistent ontological issues, but it's done so whimsically, so light-heartedly, that it promises to turn the conventions of the sim genre inside-out. I, for one, can't wait to get my hands on it!

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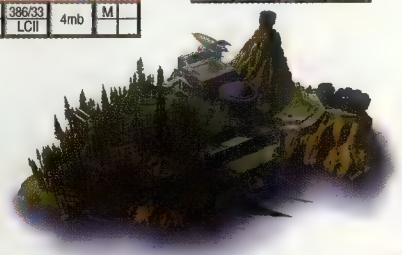
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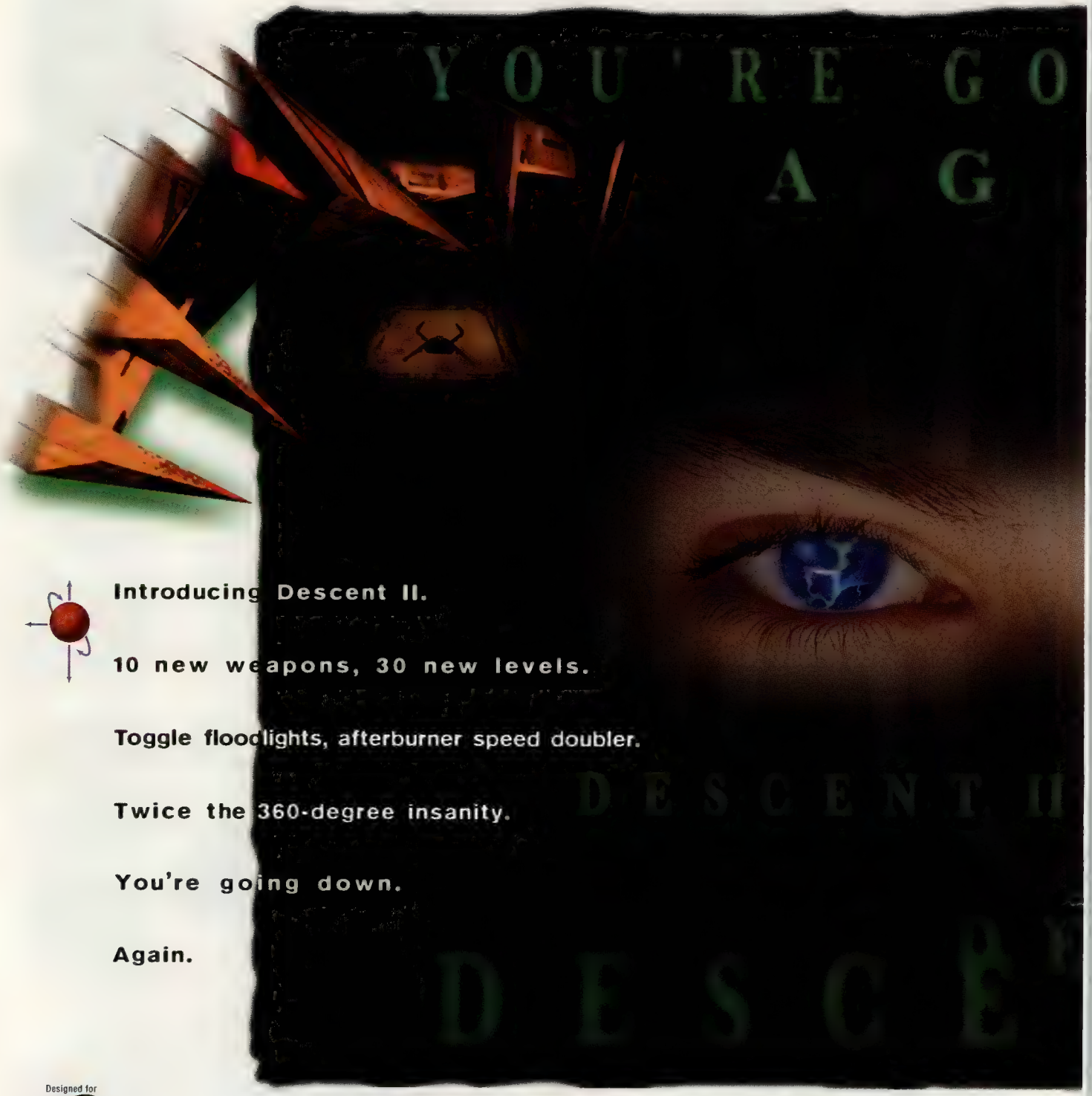
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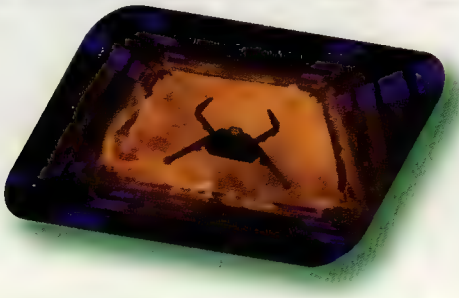
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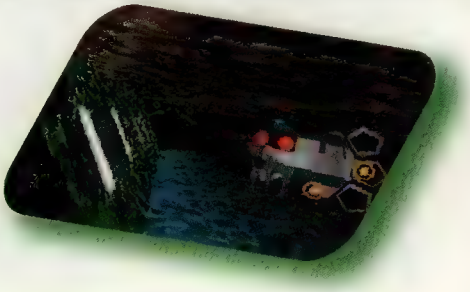
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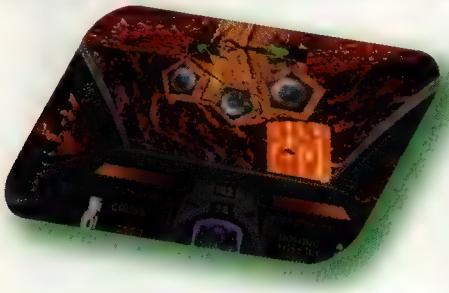


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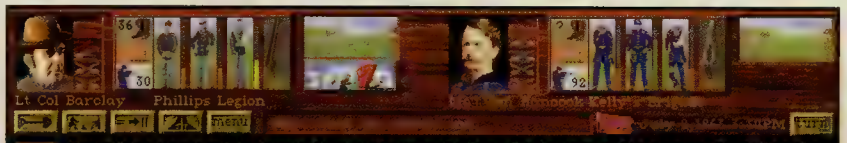
Product Information Number 124

Robert E. Lee's Civil

Sierra and Impressions tackle the War Between the States

Everybody loves the underdog, especially wargaming fans. So this new simulation of the Civil War has the right title — and all the right elements — for success.

—T. Liam McDonald



Everything you need to know about various units is at the bottom of the screen, including the strength of the leader, movement points, firepower, remaining ammo, current terrain, and other essential factors.

There's an inexplicable conundrum in computer wargames: The Civil War is the most popular and studied epoch of American history, countless books are written about the subject, "reenactors" gather regularly to stage battles, and quality Civil War boardgames are produced in great quantities. Yet, to date, there have been few great new Civil War games on computer.

You have to go back to SSI titles like *Shiloh* and *Gettysburg* — so outdated that they can't even be played on many modern machines — to find really quality Civil War titles. Impressions' *The Blue & The Gray;* Swfte's *Gettysburg;* and Empire's *The Civil War: 1861-1864* were all, to a greater or lesser degree, inspired failures — close, but no cigar.Why? Why is there no *Panzer General, Steel Panthers,* or *V for Victory* for the Civil War era? It's a mystery.

Well, the aforementioned Impressions is willing to take another shot at it, with a whole new system from a new designer. Its long title — *Robert's E. Lee's Civil War General* — is meant to evoke not only the image of the great Confederate commander, but also of SSI's popular *Panzer General* and *Allied General* — and with the distribution power of Sierra behind them, Impressions might just be able to capture a bit of those games' success (there were rumors of a game titled *Civil War General* from SSI, but as I write this, nothing solid has materialized).

Designed by long-time wargamer Jeffery Fiske, Impressions' *Civil War General* may just be what wargamers and CW buffs have been longing for. *CWG* feels like a Civil War version of *Steel Panthers,* with very sharp high-res graphics, a good interface, and plenty of depth under the hood. The project found its genesis in another Impressions title — *Front Lines* — which had some interesting potential that it never quite fulfilled.

"This game started off as a high-end graphical Civil War version of *Front Lines,*" Fiske acknowledges. "That was a high-quality graphics program which, if it had done a little more time in development, would have had much better gameplay. So, we started to do a *Front Line* conversion, and started moving further and further away from it as we went on. We finally wound up with what we have now, which is very sophisticated graphically, and has a very detailed game engine. Games like *Panzer General* — which was fun and had ease of use — came out in this time



Union and Confederates meet at Gettysburg. The red dots are place-holders that will be replaced with improved art in the finished game; they designate a unit's range of movement.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Robert E. Lee's Civil War General*
Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007
(800) 757-7707
Projected Price: N/A
Amount Done: 75%

In a nutshell:

A Civil War game with the good looks and playability of SSI's *Steel Panthers.*

What's so special?

There are seven battles and a full campaign game, online history, and extensive use of reenactment footage.

Why should I care?

Civil War games are rare enough, but good Civil War games are even more rare. This one might just be one of the good ones.

And when's it coming out?

April

War General

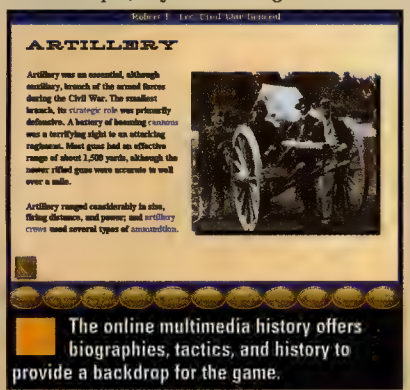


as well. We wanted to make a Civil War game that was easy to use, fun, looked good, and was historically accurate."

So, *CWG* drifted so far away from *Front Lines* that the connection is no longer even recognizable. What emerged during this process was a detailed, brigade-level game based on a 200 yards-per-hex ratio. The game covers seven historical battles and one full campaign, any of which can be played from either side. The seven battles are First and Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and then one undecided post-Gettysburg conflict, either Spotsylvania or the Wilderness. Choosing the battles and campaign was simple: "The most interesting campaign was the one led by Robert E. Lee against the Army of the Potomac. It coverts to computer gameplay better than any other set of conflicts. Not to mention that you have the advantage that everybody wants to play the underdog, and Robert E. Lee sparks the imagination of many people who are into the Civil War."

Fiske sees *CWG* as "a game of morale and maneuver. You have to drive the enemy from the hex and wind up in better shape at the end of the game. There are hexes that improve morale, so you're going to be fighting over these hexes." As such, there are no "victory hexes" as in most wargames, and much of the model is based upon how you use your units in battle, how you manage your leaders, and how high your morale is. Leaders play a huge part in the game, and every important Civil War leader is included except for Lee himself, since it is assumed that the player takes on the role of Lee.

How you assign and use historical general adds to combat effectiveness. For example, if you have a good unit that needs a little extra push to make a charge, you can add Longstreet to that unit. Of course, Longstreet has just as much a chance of being killed as anyone else — and when he's gone, he's gone for the entire course of the game.



The online multimedia history offers biographies, tactics, and history to provide a backdrop for the game.



The distinctive art of Mort Kunstler will not only be used on the cover of *Robert E. Lee's Civil War General*, but also throughout the game itself.

Each battle begins with historical units placed in their historical locations. You can't buy units at any point in the game, although reinforcements do arrive throughout each battle as they did historically. Much of how you change the course of history deals with how you use supply and morale points. In the campaign game, between each battle, you get a certain number of supply points based on how you did, so you can upgrade units' weapons and shift around leaders. In between battles, you also get replacements for units killed in the previous battles, but of course they'll be new recruits, green and easy to kill.

Unlike the occasionally confusing multi-level phased attacks of *Battleground: Gettysburg*, *CWG* uses simple alternated phases: one side attacks, then the other. Attacking is simple: click on a unit, then click on a target. There's no opportunity fire, but when an attack is launched, the defender fires first, to simulate the effect of opportunity fire. Two players can play head-to-head, either at the same computer, or linked via modem.

As for the gravy, Impressions is doing a lot to make sure there's plenty of it. First, there's a complete multimedia history, with bios, strategy, and other useful background information. The extraordinary art of famed Civil War painter Mort Kunstler is used throughout the game as menu and splash screens, which gives *CWG* a distinctive, classy look. Finally, conflicts will unroll with extensive video clips provided by Jay Wurtz, the man responsible for Smithsonian's *Battles of the Civil War*. Wurtz is providing reenactment footage, with people in proper terrain, proper attire, and the right weapons, and these will play during battle resolutions.

All the little touches wargamers have come to expect are also there. Information on friendly and enemy units is easily accessible, attempts have been made to create solid AI, fog-of-war can be in effect, and small animations will be added to spice things up a bit. As Fiske points out, "in terms of ease of use and speed of play, you could say it's similar to *Panzer General*. But there's a real historical model going on under the hood. *Panzer General* was fun, but *Civil War General* will be fun *and* have more realism."

PCG



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Product Information Number 94

JetFighter III



Global peace through deadly force

Last year was a pretty good one for air-combat aficionados — and if *JetFighter III* is any indication, 1996 could be even better.

—Stephen Poole

Developing flight sims must be one of the most gut-wrenching experiences in the software industry. On the one hand, you've got to try to satisfy the thirst for realism of the serious simulation enthusiasts — the ones who seem to be able to rattle off the roll rates, thrust measurements, and armament variations for every warplane created over the past 40 years. These serious sim buffs — call 'em the "hard-core" crowd — won't shy from telling anyone and everyone if there's a technical flaw in a game, and that's not the sort of word-of-mouth publicity anyone wants.

But what good is achieving complete authenticity in flight models and cockpit design if the only people who truly appreciate it are actual pilots — or gamers who've flown so many sims over the years that they could probably qualify in an F-16 tomorrow? No, the magic of any PC game is in its ability to take the user into another realm — and it doesn't help someone suspend his disbelief and experience the thrill of flight when he has to plow through a weighty manual, or spend several nights memorizing keyboard commands just to stay alive for more than 30 seconds during combat.

Finding that perfect blend of realism and playability is sort of the Philosopher's Stone of flight-sim development, and it's at the very heart of Mission Studios' upcoming *JetFighter III*, the long-awaited sequel to *JetFighter II: Advanced Tactical Fighter*. I've been playing an early version of the game for a couple of weeks now, and unless something goes seriously wrong over the next couple of months, this could the best all-around jet combat sim for some time to come.

Matthew Harmon, vice-president of development at Mission Studios, doesn't beat around the bush about his goals for the product.

"We want to be real up-front about this: We are not trying to make the ultimate, precise, end-all military flight simulator," he says. "We don't want people to even begin to think that's what *JetFighter III* is about. Our goal is to make people feel like they're flying

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *JetFighter III*
Developer: Mission Studios
Publisher: Mission Studios, 1644 Colonial Parkway, Inverness, IL 60067 (708) 991-0958
Projected Price: TBA
Percent Complete: 85%

In a nutshell:

JetFighter III is an air-combat sim, set against an all-too-possible backdrop of political turmoil and war in Central and South America.

What's so special?

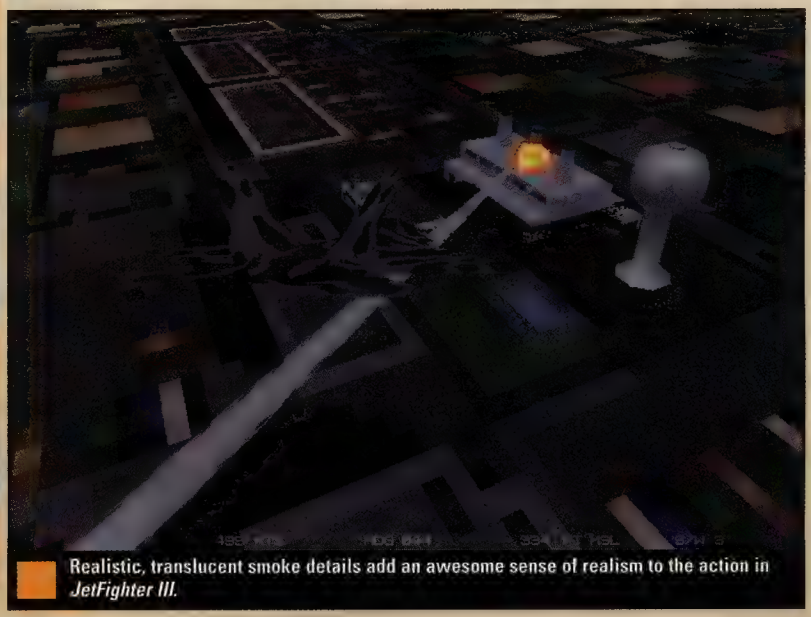
JetFighter III looks to incorporate several stunning technological achievements, but just as important to the game's "you are there" feel are the other features Mission Studios has included — smoothly scrolling first-person cinematics, distinct characters, and an extensive array of non-linear campaign missions.

Why should I care?

Because *JetFighter III* looks as though it will have that magical balance of realism and playability — the kind of game that a novice PC pilot can get hooked on, but which will still deliver enough authenticity to keep the hard-core crowd happily flying and shooting.

And when's it coming out?

First Quarter 1996



Realistic, translucent smoke details add an awesome sense of realism to the action in *JetFighter III*.

an airplane, and we want to do anything we can to achieve that."

That's just the sentiment espoused by Robert Dinnerman, creator of the first two JetFighter games and the Amiga classic, *F/A-18 Interceptor*, and the man responsible for some of the amazing technological achievements that lie beneath the user-friendly exterior of *JFIII*.

"The one most important thing in a flight sim is whatever it is that makes you feel as if you're really there," Dinnerman says. "You could toss out all the glitz and still be immersed in this environment — where you feel like you're really participating. That's the key."

One of the things that'll make you feel as if you're participating is the way the sim has been structured. You play the role of a pilot in the United Nations Rapid Deployment Force, stationed aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.N. *Peacekeeper*. And you really are on board a ship: Smoothly scrolling first-person cinematic sequences take you from your cabin to the ship's library (which features an excellent online military encyclopedia with data on more than 50 craft and weapons) to briefing and debriefing rooms — you can even check out the menu that's being served in the galley each day, or check on e-mail from around the world.

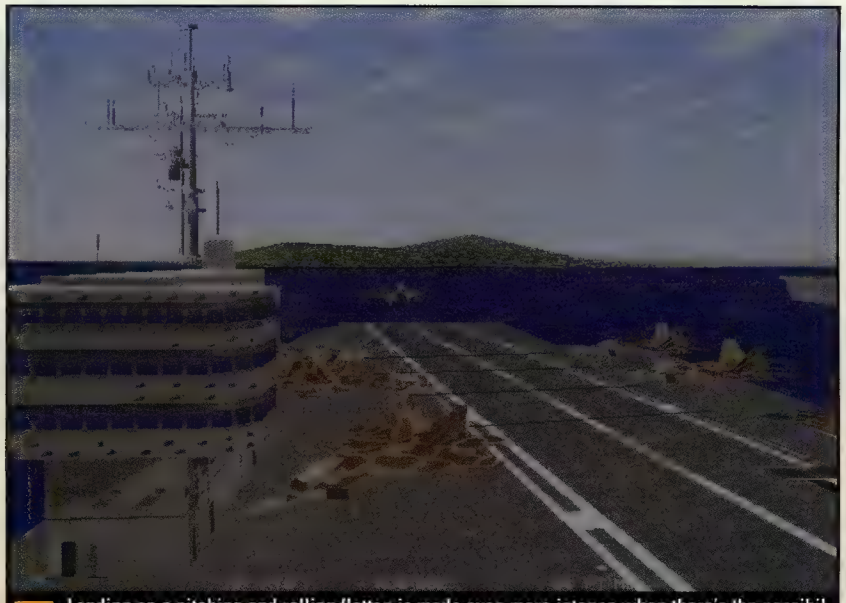
You'll definitely fly the F-22, (which, in reality, is a ground-based fighter, not designed for aircraft carrier service), and there will be at least two other aircraft available. Mission Studios was a little tight-lipped as to exactly what those jets would be, but likely candidates include the Navy's F-14 and F-18, and a "mystery" plane that is not a U.S. fighter.

Harmon says a lot of time was spent creating a modular design for *JFIII*, one that would allow for easy expansion.

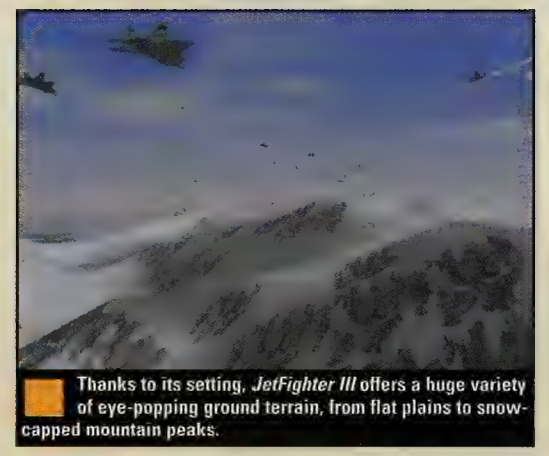
"We wanted to make an open-ended system that could use 'plug-in' stories — every campaign is really like a story," Harmon explains. "We also wanted some story ideas that would show off our scenery and terrain technology; that's why we ended up in Argentina and Chile. The story may be just a little sci-fi, but that's a pretty volatile region, so it's also grounded in reality — and the variety of terrain in those areas really let's us show off Bob's terrain engine."

And talk about showing off terrain! During the course of the sim's 100-plus missions, gamers will fly over more than two million miles of scenery — an incredible number, made even more mind-boggling when you consider that it's all real-world, texture-mapped terrain of breathtaking quality.

"For *JFIII*, Bob created a true, perspective-correct texture engine," says Harmon. "The problem with that is that it's slower than a 'fake' texture engine — the kinds where you see the ground bending and warping — but it's worth it, because that warping completely destroys altitude cues which are so important to a pilot. So Bob said, 'Hey, I'm going to do it the right way even if it's a little bit slower, because computers are getting twice as fast every year, and they'll soon grow into it.' What amazes me is that he still managed to make the damn thing run fast."



Landing on a pitching and rolling flattop is made even more intense when there's the possibility of a miscue resulting in a collision with planes already on the flight deck.



Thanks to its setting, *JetFighter III* offers a huge variety of eye-popping ground terrain, from flat plains to snow-capped mountain peaks.

Other impressive features in *JFIII* include a *very* smooth virtual cockpit; moving and pitching carrier surfaces during landing and takeoff; translucent clouds and smoke (yes, you can really see through them!); and realistic missile trails. Harmon is especially proud of the missile trails.

"They're really just a by-product of the [translucent] cloud technology," Harmon says. "But I think when we look back at it those missile trails are going to be one of the most important features of *JetFighter III*, because it really gives you an idea of the scope of the battle that's taking place — where everybody is and all the weapons that are out there flying around."

But there probably won't be a lot of "looking back" with *JFIII*, because Dinnerman built the game's graphics engine to last a long, long time.

"My original concept [when designing the engine] was to not have any limits. The only limitation would be memory and processing power, and of course both of these things will only increase with time," Dinnerman says. "Given those things, the engine, which has been in the works for quite some time now, is designed to handle as much detail as [3D Scenery Designer] Mike Woodley can create."

What's even more amazing is that, in addition to providing new, *better* scenery and missions, add-on disks will actually enhance the basic *JFIII* engine itself.

"There are most definitely going to be more features and improvements on the engine itself in every mission disk that's released — no doubt about that," says Dinnerman. "Modem and network play, for instance, won't be in the first release — we were more concerned with getting the engine running as flawlessly as we could — but it's an extremely high priority for the first mission disk." There are also plans to support VR helmets and the new breed of 3D accelerator cards, but both Harmon and Dinnerman say they'll have to wait and see which products set the standards in those respective areas before making firm plans.

There's a ton of technology crammed into *JFIII*; that's why it took so long to complete. But while everyone at both Mission Studios and RD Technologies is justifiably proud of the technological achievements, it all boils down to what Harmon says: "The important thing to us is that you feel like you're flying — and the word you've got to underline four or five times is *'feel.'* We think *JetFighter III* does that pretty damned well."

PCG



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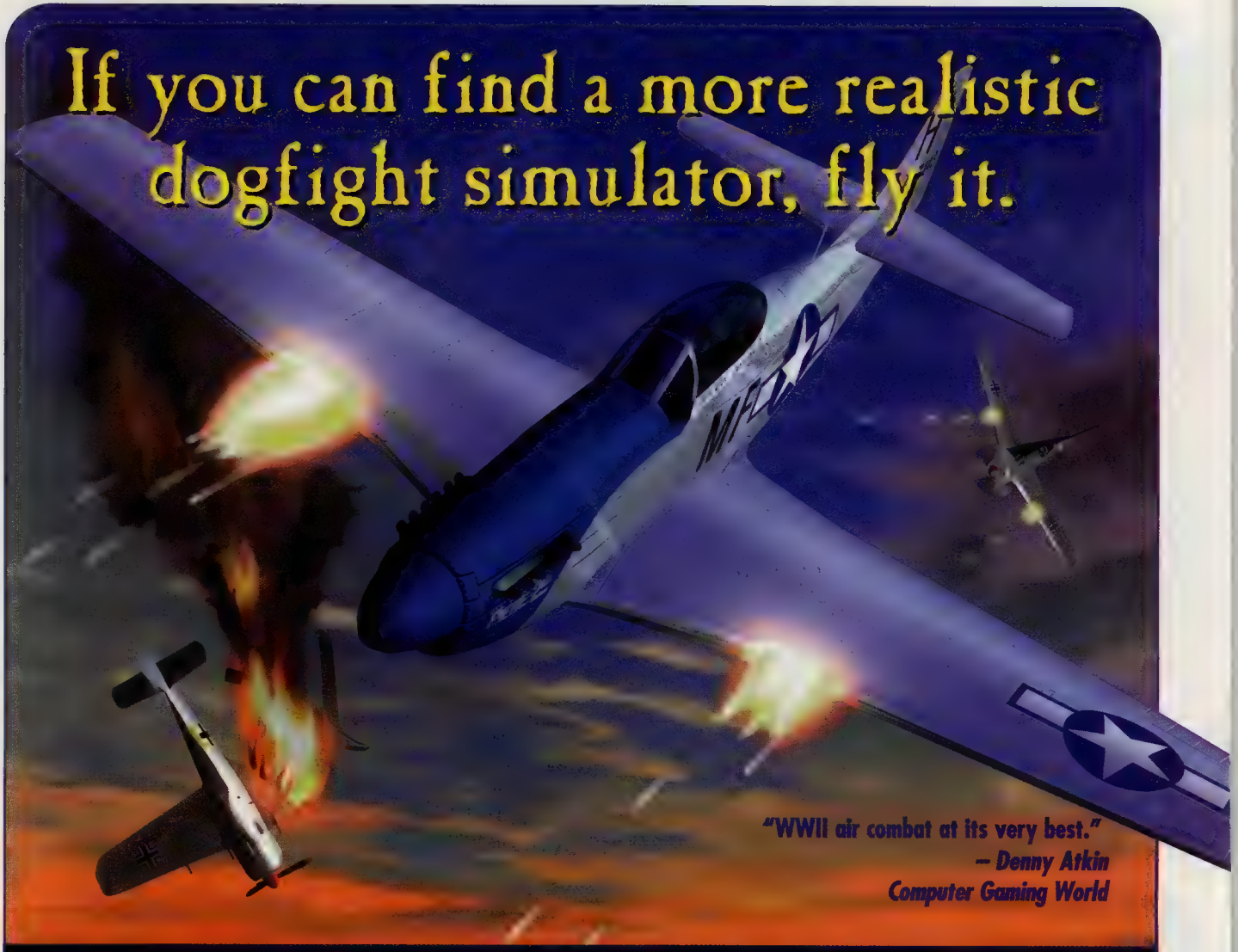
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Product Information Number 147

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"WWII air combat at its very best."
— Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World

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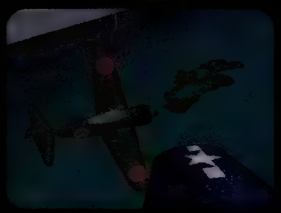
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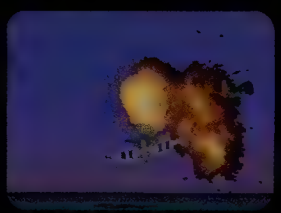
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Dogfight the deadly Zero or 12 other classic WWII war birds.



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Where Gamers Gather

The Total Entertainment Network gears up for the big time

The Total Entertainment Network (TEN) is one of the most promising entrants in the burgeoning field of online game services. One thing that immediately sets TEN apart from the competition is a commitment to a specific demographic: computer gamers between the ages of 18 and 35. This is reflected in the number and quality of the game titles they've acquired, as well as the interface they've designed.



The Total Entertainment Network's interface is slick, attractive, and seamlessly integrated with the Internet.

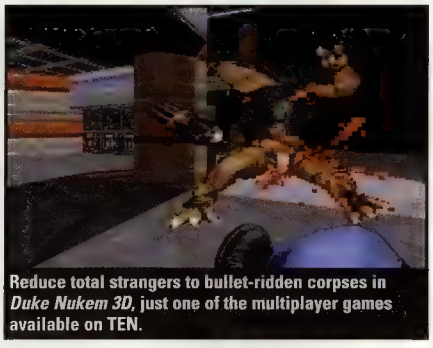


Don't worry about a lack of high-speed access numbers in your area; you'll be able to reach TEN directly through the Internet.

Titles currently available on the beta test version of TEN include *Terminal Velocity*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *CivNet*, the online version of Sid Meier's classic *Civilization*. Other titles that TEN has confirmed include *Panzer General*, *SpaceTraders: 2525*, *SimCity*, *Shadow Warrior*, *Blood*, and the eagerly-awaited *Falcon 4.0*. All these games will be available to users in multiplayer format, and TEN is hard at work acquiring even more titles. Most of these games will ship with the TEN connection software built onto their CD-ROMs, so that each TEN subscriber doesn't have to buy and install every game; rather, they play any of the games they already own that support the TEN connection.

But even with this impressive lineup of available online games, TEN is determined not to be a one-dimensional, games-only network. Besides such typical services as E-mail, file areas, and chat rooms, TEN will offer seamless integration with other Internet resources, allowing users to use their existing Internet tools, such as Netscape, without leaving TEN itself.

Although they've been beta-testing in the San Francisco area for a while and have been working on development for many years now, TEN isn't scheduled for a major launch until the end of 1996.


Reduce total strangers to bullet-ridden corpses in *Duke Nukem 3D*, just one of the multiplayer games available on TEN.

TEN began as a merger of two older online gaming networks: Outland and Planet Optigon, and determined from the outset to address what they saw as a lack of quality multiplayer games on the Internet. "This is our territory," said Daniel Goldman, the president of TEN. "We've been doing this a long time. We're going to be the best."

The service's interface is sleek and attractive, and users will be able to customize it to suit their mood. They can also upload any graphic file they want to represent themselves online. Another note: this service is for adults only. You must be 18 or over to play. Part of the reasoning behind this was to neatly sidestep the whole issue of censoring content, which causes so many problems on other services. TEN hopes that their users will be mature enough and rational enough to be behave like adults while online, without some sort of nanny Chat Host watching over them.

One idea they're kicking around to deal with troublemakers is to set up a Purgatory room. The way it would work is if everyone in a chatroom agreed you were just too obnoxious, you would be booted into a special misfits chatroom just for your kind, with no way to leave.

Another thing they hope to do is put together virtual environments where characters can interact (a replacement of text-based chatrooms) and to eventually allow users to create their own custom chat environments.

To access TEN, you'll first need an Internet PPP dial-up account, as there will be no local access numbers. That means you will be paying both for your local Internet provider and for the TEN network. TEN doesn't see this as a long-term problem, though, as more and more big telecom companies offer internet access as part of a basic package, and connection rates for Internet service should drop dramatically.

TEN's proposed rate structure is comparable to other online services: there is a basic $9.95 fee for five hours and $2.95 for each hour after that. The current system requirements are a 486+ platform, Super VGA graphics, a 9600-baud modem and a CD-ROM drive, as the service will be distributed via CD-ROM. For the time being, TEN will be DOS-based, although there will also be a Macintosh version — although we're not sure what that will mean, given the small number of games on the Mac.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The popularity of both *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft II* may have started a new trend toward real-time wargaming. It's refreshing to see combat games that aren't turn-based, hex-happy, computerized versions of boardgames, and it's a good bet we'll see even more realistic titles in this style.



Virgin's *Z* is a real-time strategy game that promises humor to match its non-stop action.

Z

One of the newest real-time wargames comes from Virgin Interactive Entertainment. *Z* may have the shortest, strangest name in gaming history, but we bet it'll be a real blast. It's an action/strategy title like *Command & Conquer*, but wrapped in science fiction trappings.

Z is set in the far future, where rag-tag armies of warrior robots battle for control of blasted alien planets. There are six different robot soldiers for you to control, and eleven types of hardware, such as tanks, jeeps, gatling guns, and missile launchers. The robots are a rowdy lot, full of gallows humor and grim jokes — so as their squad leader , you'll have your hands full. Leave them standing around too long, and they start taking potshots at passersby.

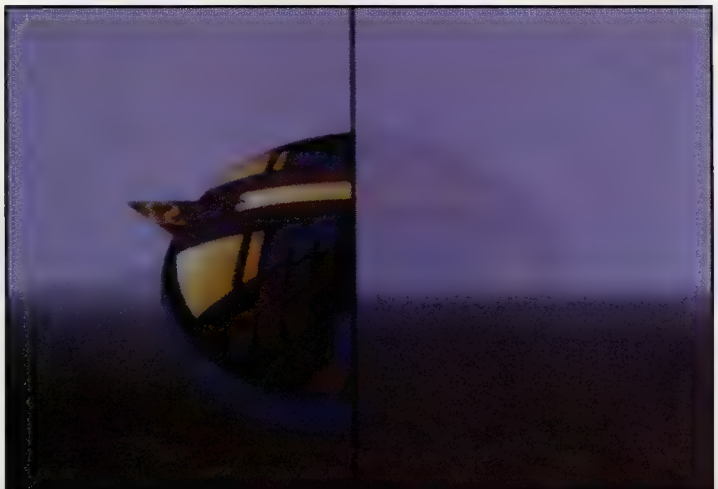
But besides the pranks, *Z* should offer solid, strategic gameplay, and of course the

Continued on page 52

On the ViRGe...

S3 introduces 64-bit graphics accelerator chip

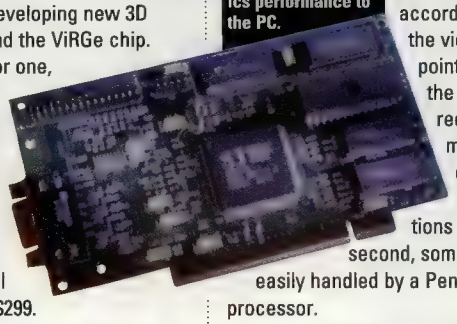
For a while, PC owners have tolerated the arrogant bragging of game console owners, whose toys feature superior 3D graphics at a fraction of a PC's price. Even though comparing an Intel processor to a game chip is something like comparing a semitruck to a scooter, consoles are designed for one purpose — games — and so 3D graphics hardware is built-in.



The new ViRGe chip provides 3D acceleration for amazing graphics that don't tax your CPU.

But the end is near for game consoles; this year the first wave of 3D accelerators will be available for the PC. It's a competitive field, but one of the largest manufacturers of graphics chips, S3, is poised to take PC graphics to the next level.

S3's new "ViRGe" line of 64-bit graphic accelerator chips will be used on third-party vendor add-in cards, as card-makers are usually among the first to adapt new technologies. Companies such as Diamond, Orchid, Hercules, and Number Nine have endorsed the new chip, and many are developing new 3D cards around the ViRGe chip. Hercules, for one, has already debuted its ViRGe-based Terminator 64/3D, which should retail for around $299.



S3's ViRGe accelerator card will bring unparalleled graphics performance to the PC.

By the end of the year, OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) will be incorporating the ViRGe directly into systems, adding only about $50 to systems prices. By that time, Microsoft's Direct3D API should be in place and fully supported, so any properly designed game will run on any system, taking full advantage of whatever 3D hardware is on-board.

The key to 3D graphics is that the accelerator takes much of the demanding graphics processing burden off the system CPU, allowing designers to attempt much more ambitious visuals without slowing overall game performance. So far, this has meant concentration on two main graphic components: geometry, and the actual object rendering.

The geometric calculations are handled by the processor. Rotating and translating the objects according to the viewpoint of the user requires millions of calculations per second, something easily handled by a Pentium processor.

But *rendering* the graphics — actually drawing them, and covering them with realistic textures — is left to the pixel-processing hardware that chips like the ViRGe are designed for. By taking care of these processor-intensive advanced graphics techniques, such as tri-linear MIP mapping and other rendering functions, the accelerator frees up the Pentium to calculate the next frame, vastly increasing overall speed.

And now, the techno-talk: The ViRGe S3d graphics engine supports all these features, as well as its own proprietary MUX buffering, which allows for Z-buffering with no additional memory requirement. Working together, the ViRGe and your processor can create real-time, photorealistic 3D environments unheard of in PC Gaming. *DOOM* meets *Myst*.

The ViRGe also does what your typical higher-end graphics card on the market does today, including 2D Windows GUI acceleration and MPEG-1 audio/video decoding. It supports high screen resolutions of 256 colors at 1280x1024, 64,000 colors at 1024x768, and even 16 million colors at 800x600. Furthermore, it includes drivers for all major operating systems, including OS/2, and even non-x86 CPU support for Power PCs. The ViRGe will be available in 1 MB, 2 MB and 4 MB DRAM configurations.

The potential is exciting. 3D acceleration technology actually gives game developers a way to develop superior games with far less time wasted worrying about hardware. It's a watershed event, comparable to the introduction of sound cards, CD-ROMs, or the original VGA card.

One final word of advice: sell those PlayStations this summer, while you can still get a good price for them.

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Product Information Number 133

Continued from page 50

top-down perspective and real-time combat, which made both *C&C* and *War II* so much fun. It'll be out in April.

The Die Hard Trilogy

Totally changing the subject, our next *Under Construction* bit is *The Die Hard Trilogy*. Based on the popular movies starring Bruce Willis, the interesting thing here is that three different games will be on the one CD, each game in a different style and based on a different movie in the trilogy.

Die Hard will be a *Doom*-style shooter, where your mission is to rescue the hostages from the terrorists. You'll kill the terrorists with the usual array of handguns, bombs, grenades, and machine-guns, but you start the game with

Continued on page 53

Online Adventure

Sierra On-Line is at work on The Realm

Most computer roleplaying games aren't true roleplaying games at all; roleplaying means taking on the role of an imaginary character and then interacting with others doing the same. On the other hand, online RPGs have tried to get back to the original concept, from text-based MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) on the Internet to early ventures such as INN's *Shadows of Yserbius* and AOL's *Red Dragon Inn*. Still, no one has quite pulled off a full-blown, graphically attractive, multi-user online campaign yet.

That may change. Sierra On-Line is now at work on something called *The Realm*, which will offer graphical adventuring over an Internet TCP/IP connection. You can band with other adventurers to explore the land, fight horrible monsters, and then return to the taverns to brag of your prowess in a nice, cozy chatroom.



"Let's go adventuring!" "No, let's go to the chatroom, form private guilds and ostracize newbies!"

Currently, system requirements are listed as a 486/50; 8MB of RAM; a 9600 modem; Win 3.1 or 95; SuperVGA; and a SLIP/PPP Internet account. As of press time, it was still possible to register for a free beta tester account. Point your web browser to *http://www.realmserver.com/* and check it out.

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Hanging in There

An update on OS/2 gaming

A tiny band of rebels still defies the gargantuan might of the overlords, bravely fighting on when all seems lost. No, we're not talking about a new Star Wars game here, but about OS/2 users who scorn Microsoft's Windows 95 — and continuously bombard us with complaints about a lack of coverage for their platform. After all this is *PC Gamer*, not *Microsoft Gamer*, they say, and so this month we've a little peace offering for the holdouts.



Galactic Civilizations was the first major OS/2 game. Will *Galactic Civilizations 2* be the last?

A newcomer to OS/2 publishing called Warped Software is preparing *Blade Warriors*, a game that puts you in roller blades and sends people out trying to kill you — all for the benefit of some jaded television audience of the future. This game promises to be a fast-paced action game, hardly common among native OS/2 titles. The game features 2-8 player TCP/IP connections, configurable "gore" levels, and numerous arenas and terrain types to challenge even the most adept skater. Look for it toward the end of March.

Another OS/2 loyalist, Stardock, is famous for *Galactic Civilizations*, billed as the number one OS/2 game of all time. Practically unknown outside the OS/2 world, die-hard galactic emperors swear by this sci-fi strategy game. The sequel, *Galactic Civilizations 2*, features a revamped interface, updated graphics, automatic research management (a big headache in the original), and improvements on the computer player's AI. Stardock also deserves a galaxy of credit for offering upgrades from the original version for half the retail price. For more information, call (313) 453-0328, or visit the Stardock website at *http://oeonline.com/~stardock*.

Somewhat belatedly, Maxis has released the OS/2 version of *SimCity 2000*, the updated classic of the original *SimCity*, as well as *SimTown* and *Widget Workshop*, two children's titles. *SimCity 2000*, in case you didn't know, lets you build and manage an entire metropolis through the decades. All of these titles are available now; to order call (800) 526-2947.

And one more gaming tidbit: A good web site for finding info on how to optimize your DOS games under OS/2 is *http://eye-lab.msu. edu/os2games/*.

Continued from page 52

bare feet, and will need to find boots as well as weapons.

The second game, *Die Harder*, is billed as a traditional arcade game. You'll chase the terrorists through the besieged Washington International Airport on foot and on a snowmobile.

Die Hard With a Vengeance puts you behind the wheel for some terrorist-chasing, street-racing driving. You'll use fifteen different vehicles, everything from a Yugo to a Ferrarri, as you finally take the fight to those pesky terrorists.

Bare feet and a Yugo? Don't ask me. But three games from three movies on one CD sounds like a good idea to us. Look for it this Spring. Yippie ki yay...

Continued on page 55



"I just escaped two poachers, brought down a wildebeest, and kept a pack of hyenas at bay... *all before lunch!*"

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Get elected to a virtual Oval Office in *President 96*, a free, multi-user web game from Crossover Technologies.

Game-Weaving on the Web

Conquer the White House — or even the Galaxy!

Make that browser do something useful — play some games on the World Wide Web. Although the WWW may be the worst gaming platform to date, it's not for want of trying. There's a lot of creative efforts out there, and here's a quick look at some of the best.

Reinventing America may sound like a campaign slogan, but in fact it's a web-based political game. As the '96 election race heats up, you can get involved by participating in this virtual political arena. More than 2,000 participants vote, debate, and form political alliances as they deal with the great issues of the day. There's no cost to play: you merely need to register as a user on the system. Check out this interesting blend of politics, the Internet, and sim gaming at *http://www pathfinder.com/reinventing/* as soon as possible.

Although this game has been in progress for a while, the same team is launching a new presidential race game, allowing you to become a campaign manager for a virtual candidate. Again, the game is free for all users, merely requiring you to register. Check it out at *http://www.crossover.com/pres96*.

If becoming leader of the whole galaxy is more your style, definitely check out *Stellar Crisis*. The first and only Web-based multiplayer science fiction conquest game, it's something you just have to see. *Stellar Crisis* lets players build ships, colonize planets, attack each other, and even chat. The server updates each player's page every three to five minutes, so it's perfect to run on your desktop while doing some other — ahem — work. Take your forms-compliant browser to *http://www.liberty.net.org:8080/sc* and stomp some planets.



Here's the menu system where you'll run your *Stellar Crisis* Empire. Witness the powerful *PC Gamer* Empire just before it conquers the entire known galaxy.



Each empire chooses an icon to represent them on the starmap. Gosh, they're ugly!

Continued from page 53

Total Mayhem & Flying Nightmares 2

Origin's *Crusader: No Remorse* gave 3D action games a new look after so many Doom clones. Hot on the heels of *Crusader* is Domark's *Total Mayhem*, a multi-player action shooter with a similar look to Origin's hit. In *Total Mayhem*, you lead a squad of six Freedom Fighters equipped in battle armor, through deserts, jungles and ocean terrain, as you search out and destroy your equally deadly enemies. High points of this game include gaining experience through combat, weapon selection strategies, and a computer AI that should let the bad guys know when to stand and fight and when to run away.



"All right troops, through the fence and watch for exploding robots." It sounds like *Total Mayhem* is about to break out!

Another Domark title due out this Spring is *Flying Nightmares 2*, an air combat sim. You have your choice of the Harrier jumpjet or the Super-Cobra attack helicopter, as you battle a resurgent communist threat. The multiplayer option will allow up to eight networked players to duke it out in team vs. team aerial combat.

Fully compatible with the Yamaha and S3 graphics accelerators, *Flying Nightmares 2* will be one of the first multiplayer aerial combat games to take advantage of the new built-in 3D graphics hardware.

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Product Information Number 111

We Care About Shareware

The Association of Shareware Professionals goes online

The Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) has long been seen as the leader of the shareware community, and they've recently expanded their presence onto the Internet with a new ftp site and web site.

The ASP has a membership of more than 1500 developers. The association's stated purpose is to promote shareware as an alternative form of software marketing and to supports its members with distribution.



Doom, the King of the Shareware Games. Here in this room, episode one, mission one of the shareware version of *Doom*, is where it all began.

"We're extremely excited that our two Internet sites are up and running," said Richard Harper, president of the ASP. "Now computer users with Internet access can tap into the kind of information and programs we've made available through other online activities."

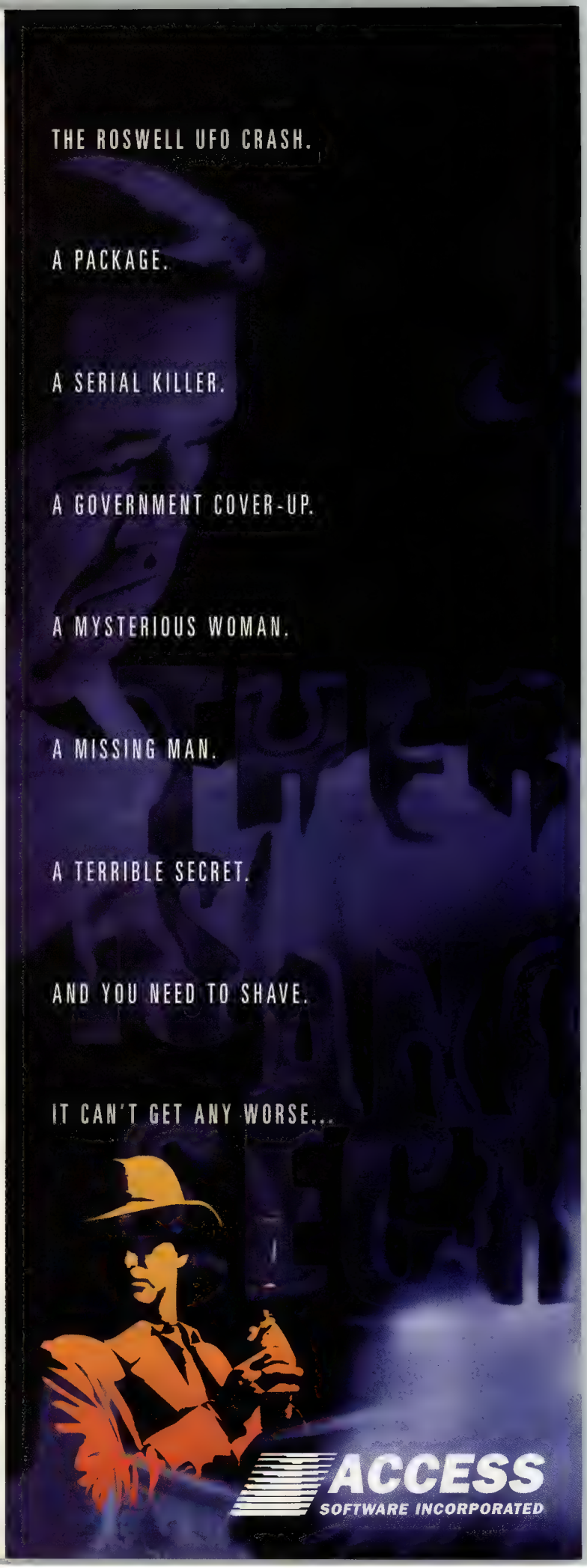
If you're still not sure what shareware is and how it works, here goes: most commercial software products are released in the stores in shrink-wrapped boxes. This covers anything from word processing software like *WordPerfect* to games such as *Phantasmagoria*. Naturally, shelf space is limited, competition is high, and it's the big companies with the big bucks that get that valuable retail real estate.

Shareware companies, on the other hand, are small companies, often only single individuals, who simply lack the clout to get their products in the public market through traditional marketing. Instead they release an evaluation copy of their software, be it a spreadsheet or an arcade game, to the public through bulletin boards and the Internet. Although the quality of these releases can vary, there have been some excellent, landmark products over the years that started out as shareware. *PKZip*, *Eudora*, *Netscape* and — of course — *Doom*, to name but a few, all got their start as shareware.

Shareware companies depend on users to register their products after they try them, paying a small fee for the full version of the program. For games, this typically involves a bunch of new levels, plus things like cheat codes, additional weapons, more enemies, level editors — in short, a full package.

Now you can visit the Association of Shareware Professionals' Internet sites, and check out the latest offerings. The website address is *http://www.asp-shareware.org*, while the ftp site is *ftp://ftp.asp-shareware.org*.

The ASP also maintains the ASPFORUM forum on CompuServe and the ASP forum on the Microsoft Network. When you download those shareware titles, remember to support their authors as well, so they can continue to produce creative, innovative, and inexpensive alternatives to commercial retail software. It's the right thing to do.



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Product Information Number 81

The Ultimate Gamer

Could IBM's new Aptiva be it?

Car lovers dream about Maseratis, audiophiles about their own home recording studio, and computer gamers about, well, the perfect game machine.

IBM hopes they've hit on the latter, as they've just released a limited edition machine called the Ultimate Gamer, from their popular Aptiva line (yes, the one with the annoying world-music-type commercials, and George Clinton standing on a rock in the desert).

The Aptiva M91 features a 133MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, a 28.8/14.4 data/fax modem, and two — count 'em, *two* — 1.6GB hard drives. It's fully loaded for Multimedia too, with a 6x CD-ROM drive, an IBM Mwave sound card complete with speakers and a subwoofer, and one of those newfangled 3D accelerator cards, a Matrox MGA Millenium.

The Ultimate Gamer comes bundled with quite a few games too: *Descent, Cyberia, Silent Steel, Jack Nicklaus Golf, Endorfun, Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure, 3D Pinball, Flight Unlimited,* and an enhanced version of *NASCAR.* And to play all these games, there's a brand new Logitech Wingman Extreme joystick.

Oh, and just in case you're feeling a little guilty about using all this horsepower just for a few games, IBM has thrown in quite a few non-gaming titles, too, under a heading it calls, appealingly enough, "Productivity." Here you'll find spreadsheets, word processors, and other action titles. Whether you become more productive, of course, is up to you.

But all this is just icing on the cake. What you're paying for is power: a very fast CPU, 16 megs of RAM, over three Gigabytes of storage, and all the latest multimedia gadgets and doodads pre-installed and pre-configured.

The price? A mere $4,499, including a 15" monitor. But if you're still with us at this point, you might as well go for the 17" monitor option, at only $4,999. Call IBM's direct sales line at (800) 426-7255 for details, but hurry: supplies are, we're told, limited.

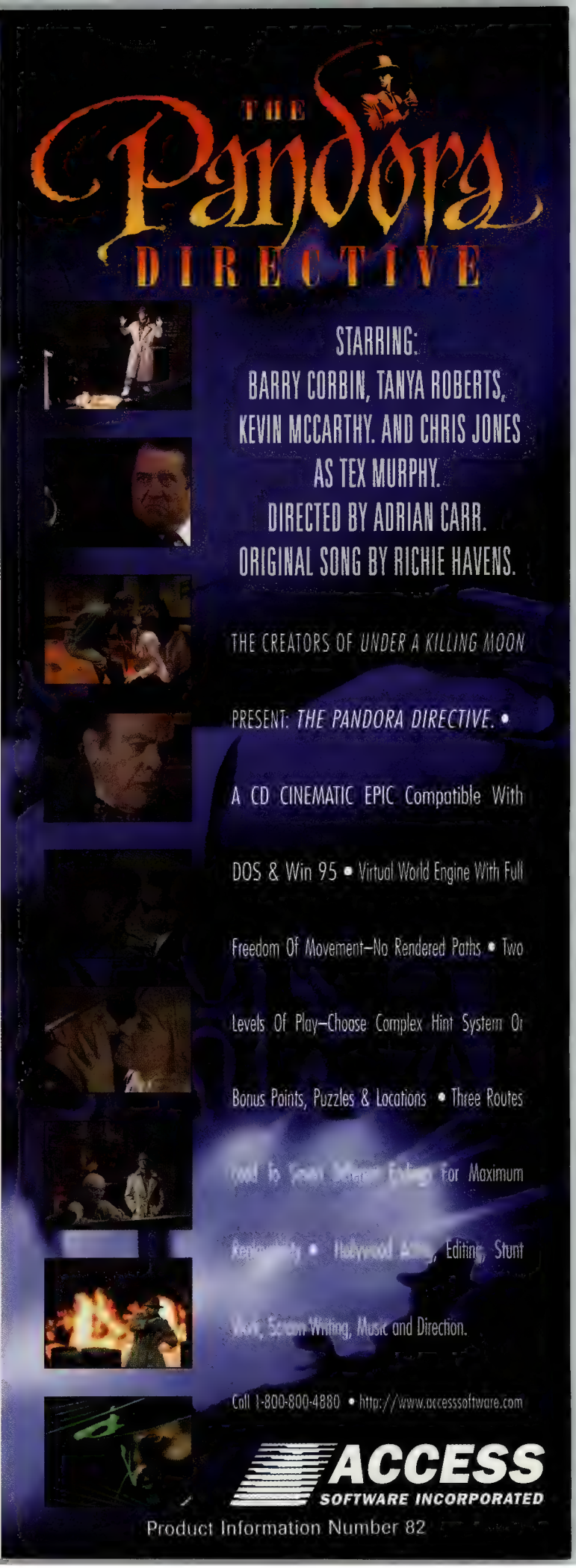
The PC Gamer Playlist

It's quite a challenge playing every single game that comes out, and the only way we can do it is by giving up sleep altogether. Although the sleepless lifestyle is rough at first, after the first few months it's not so bad. We've actually gotten quite good at it, and have come to enjoy it. Anyway, the games must go on. Here's who's playing what:

1. *Warcraft II*/Blizzard Entertainment — Everybody
2. *Command & Conquer*/ Virgin Interactive Entertainment — Dan, Todd
3. *The Dig*/LucasArts — Joe, Lisa
4. *CyberMage*/Origin — Dan, Jason
5. *Capitalism*/Interactive Magic — Jason, Carol, Joe
6. *Beavis and Butt-Head*/ Viacom New Media — Everyone
7. *Descent II*/Interplay Productions — Mike, Dean
8. *Heroes of Might and Magic*/New World Computing — Jason, Joe
9. *Destruction Derby*/Sony Interactive — Dan, Dean, Carol
10. *EF2000*/ Ocean of America — Todd, Dan, Jason



Warcraft II's orcs are tough.



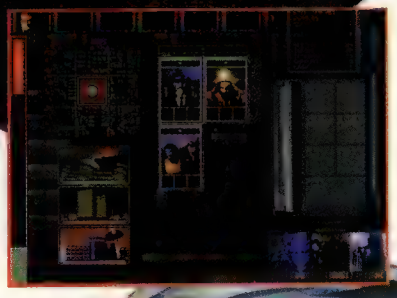

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Product Information Number 119

The Year's BEST GAMES



It may be the hardest thing we do all year — picking the year's best games out of a raft of excellent titles.

by the Editors of *PC Gamer*

Normally, this is where you'd read a lengthy explanation of how we go about picking the winners — the highly scientific, computerized process we use to determine which games deserve the *PC Gamer* Award.

But we're not going to kid you. We picked the best of the best the old-fashioned way: we sat everybody down and argued about it.

After a nice Christmas lunch at one of the Bay area's nicer eateries, we all headed back to the office, stuffed and sleepy, and holed up in a claustrophobic conference room, where we cajoled, persuaded, and contradicted each other for hours. We didn't come out until we had a list of winners we could all agree on.

It's early January as we go to press, and here they are, as we see 'em — the best PC games of 1995.

Game of the Year

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

PC GAMER AWARD WINNER

Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
19840 Pioneer Ave.
Torrance, CA 90503
(310) 793-0060



Warcraft II's fantastic attention to detail and hugely varied play easily made it the best game of 1995.

Frankly, this one was easy. There were plenty of other great games in 1995, but no one loved the real-time strategy action of *Warcraft II* more than the staff of *PC Gamer*.

With this one, the talented and dedicated people at Blizzard clearly did exactly what you have to do if you want to develop a terrific game: they kept the *players* in mind every step of the way. They started with a fantastic game — *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*, one of the finest, most addictive games of 1994, and a runner-up for last year's Best Strategy Game award — and they listened very closely to the suggestions of fans and critics as they designed its sequel.

The result was *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness*, a sequel that was in every way superior to its excellent predecessor. There were larger maps — some of them four times the size of the maps in *Warcraft*. An improved interface made it much easier to select groups of Orcs or Humans and send them into battle. The gorgeous Super VGA graphics took our breath away. The new buildings and military units included naval and airborne assets like destroyers, submarines, zeppelins, and dragons. The scenario editor and a random mission generator made sure the game was always fresh, even after we'd completed the preset campaign missions. The sly humor, the expanded multi-player options: all these elements combined to make *Warcraft II* stand out — way out — as the most impressive, most entertaining, game of 1995, and one we'll be playing long into 1996. We can't wait to see what new wonders Blizzard has in store for us this year.

Best Action Game

MechWarrior 2

PC GAMER AWARD WINNER

Developer: Activision
Publisher: Activision
11601 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(800) 477-3650

This one was a long time in coming, but it truly was worth the wait. Activision insisted that the follow-up to *MechWarrior* should be light-years ahead of the original — and the competition — even to the point of scrapping a game design that was well under way and starting almost from scratch with a new team.

Activision probably didn't make many friends with that move — not even among gamers, who were eager to get their hands on the new MechWarrior game — but their determination to produce the best game possible paid off in spades. *MechWarrior II* has everything an action game needs — beautiful graphics; great sound effects; smooth animation, even at high resolution; lots of options; and tons of firepower — all set against the wonderfully rich background of FASA's Battletech universe. There aren't a whole bunch of giant-battling-robot games on the market — but even if they were as numerous as *Doom* clones, it's clear that *MechWarrior II* would be the best of them.

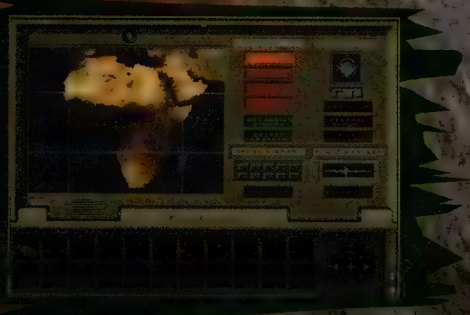


Amazing high-res graphics helped *MechWarrior 2* stand out from the crowd

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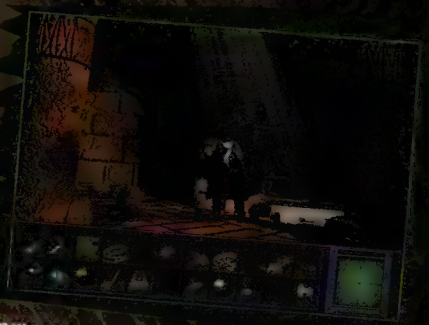
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VIACOM newmedia

Product Information Number 172

PC & MAC CD-ROM

Adventure Game

Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

Developer: Viacom New Media
Publisher: Viacom New Media
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
(800) 469-2539



No, we're not kidding. *Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity* really was the best adventure of 1995. And we're not just saying that because we're big fans of MTV's willfully stupid and endlessly hilarious delinquent duo. It's also because *Beavis and Butt-Head* does so very well at what it sets out to do.

This game is a textbook example of the *right* way to bring material from another medium to PC gaming. It's not at all what we've come to expect from a game based on a TV license — i.e., a mediocre game that's expected to sell, not because it's entertaining, but because it's attached to a famous name or two. Instead, it's a solid graphic adventure that just *happens* to be about Beavis and Butt-Head. If you don't like the boys, you probably won't like *Virtual Stupidity* — but we thought it was a blast. And it's probably the best PC game based on a TV show since Interplay's *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* game.

Best Arcade Game

FX Fighter

Developer: Argonaut Software
Publisher: GTE Entertainment
P.O. Box 4358
Carlsbad, CA 92017
(800) GTE-TODAY



FX Fighter brought traditional fighting into the third dimension.

Maybe it's because some people still can't stop thinking about the PC as a serious business machine — even though it has become a fantastic platform for gaming — but really good arcade-style games are still very hard for PC gamers to come by.

GTE's *FX Fighter* was an exception to that rule, a one-on-one fighting game that contained all the characters and special moves found in the arcade version — and looked very nearly as good as the big coin-op machine.

FX Fighter added a new twist to the now-classic stand-and-fight paradigm, with 3D, texture-mapped combatants and a roving "camera" that moved to give the best view of the battle. Best of all, the more sophisticated graphics didn't come at a high price — *FX Fighter*'s animation was quite smooth on a reasonably fast 486-based PC. We can only hope that *FX Fighter*'s success means that the Mortal Kombat games will no longer be some of the only big-name arcade games adapted to the PC; meanwhile, GTE has given us something to keep us out of the arcades for a little longer.

Best CD-ROM Enhancement

TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM

Developer: Lucas Arts
Publisher: Lucas Arts
P.O. Box 10307
San Rafael, CA
(800) 782-7927



LucasArts' *TIE Fighter* CD-ROM made a great game even !

We're not sure how much longer this category will last; in fact, 1995 may have been its final year. Now that the great majority of PC games are coming out first on CD-ROM and skipping floppy disks entirely, an award that praises the best adaptation to CD of a floppy-based game is an endangered species.

Fortunately, 1995 brought us a game that clearly deserves the honor — and, not too surprisingly, it's the sequel to the game that won our Best CD-ROM Enhancement award last year. In producing the *TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM*, LucasArts didn't just slap their excellent, Star Wars-inspired space-combat game on a silver disc. And they didn't just shovel the original game and the add-on scenario, *Defender of the Empire*, onto the same disk. Instead, they added full digitized speech, new spacecraft, new missions, and — most impressive of all — high-resolution SVGA graphics. The result is an enhanced CD-ROM version that comes close to being a whole new game, and is well worth having even if you've already got the original *TIE Fighter*.

Best Educational Product

Elroy Goes Bugzerk

Developer: Headbone Interactive
Publisher: Headbone Interactive
1520 Bellevue Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 323-0073



Elroy Goes Bugzerk featured a unique graphic style and story line.

The first in a series inventively titled What the Heck Will Elroy Do Next?, *Elroy Goes Bugzerk* follows the adventures of an irrepressible ten-year-old and his dog, Blue, as they search for a very rare bug in hopes of winning the 10th Annual Insectathon. It's an innovative graphic adventure that very sneakily teaches younger gamers about insects as they solve the problems Elroy faces.

The graphics in *Elroy Goes Bugzerk* are of special interest: they're far from the polished, hand-drawn-and-digitized stuff you find in most games today. In fact, they're pretty primitive, but they convey more emotion than the more sophisticated visuals in other games can manage, and they draw you into the action despite themselves. The game's sense of humor is perfectly aimed at its intended audience, and the story is well-written and engaging. *Elroy Goes Bugzerk* does better job of hiding educational content in an entertaining game than any other title from 1995.

Best Multi-Player Game

Warcraft II

Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
19840 Pioneer Ave.
Torrence, CA 90503
(310) 793-0060



Warcraft

Our pick for best game of the year gets another nod for its excellent multi-player support. As with the best multi-player games, *Warcraft II*'s modem and network options weren't just tacked on as an afterthought — they were obviously in the designers' minds throughout the development process. Setting up a multi-player session in *WCII* is a simple, seamless process, and as many as eight people can play the game over a local-area network.

Best of all, *Warcraft II* gives you the ability to "spawn" copies of itself specifically for multi-player use; you can copy to a friend's PC just the files needed for a multi-player game. Which means that, while your friend can't play the single-player missions in *Warcraft II* without the CD-ROM, he doesn't have to buy his own copy of the game in order to link up with you for some head-to-head action. (On the other hand, we can't imagine why any self-respecting PC gamer *wouldn't* buy a copy of *Warcraft II*.)

Best Puzzle Game

3D Lemmings

Developer: Psygnosis
Publisher: Sony Interactive
2400 Broadway, Suite 510
Santa Monica, CA
(800) 825-8802



3D Lemmings showed how a classic could be revitalized.

Just when we thought we'd seen everything the Lemmings had to offer, those suicidal little mop-tops came through again — this time, in 3D.

The simple premise of the Lemmings series has made it one of the most successful runs of puzzle games in PC history: these cute, fuzzy creatures march across your PC screen, unwittingly headed for oblivion, and it's your job to activate their special skills to divert them from disaster and onto the path to safety.

Always before, the silly action took place in two dimensions, but *3D Lemmings* brought its familiar characters into a world of 3D, texture-mapped graphics and provided a whole new set of tools for looking at their surroundings. Suddenly, left and right weren't the only wrong turns the Lemmings could make — there were also up, down, backwards, and forwards. The game very literally added new depth to an already successful series. If you love puzzle games, *3D Lemmings* should be in your collection.

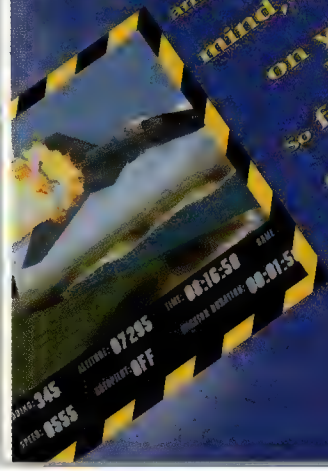
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Spectrum HoloByte

Product Information Number 159

THE 11TH HOUR
{the five stages.}

1
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You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2
Disbelief.

This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

3
Resentment.

They said it would be out, and you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!!

4
Acceptance.

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5
Death.

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You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges



with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and two CDs longer than its predecessor, The 7th Guest. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.

TRILOBYTE



Product Information Number 176

Best Roleplaying Game

No Winner

It was a very tough call, but we ultimately decided there wouldn't be a *PC Gamer* Award winner in the roleplaying category this year.

Sure, some good roleplaying games were published in 1995. *Thunderscape* was a very good game; it brought us a glimpse into the new fantasy universe SSI has created, now that they no longer hold the rights to do games based on TSR's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons games, and it gave us hope for much better games in the future. And borderline-role-playing games from Sir-tech, like *Druid* and *Jagged Alliance*, were impressive, too. But the last true role-playing game worthy of a *PC Gamer* Award was Sir-tech's *Star Trail: Realms of Arkania* — and it won the 1994 award.

The good news is that 1996 should bring an upswing in the quantity and quality of roleplaying games: we should see *Shadows Over Riva*, the sequel to *Star Trail*, as well as *Daggerfall*, the follow-up to Bethesda Softworks' *The Elder Scrolls: Arena*, which garnered runner-up status last year. With any luck, we'll have as hard a time choosing between all the great RPGs of 1996 as we had in deciding *not* to choose one for 1995.

Best Simulation

Apache

Developer: Digital Integration
Publisher: Interactive Magic
P.O. Box 13491
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
(919) 461-0722



A near-perfect balance of action and realism made *Apache* a winner.

Last year was a pretty good one for simulations, with excellent flight games like *EF2000*, *Flight Unlimited*, and *Apache*, and system simulations like *Capitalism*. When all was said and done, though, we had to give the nod to *Apache* for its appeal to a wide range of gamers.

With all of its difficulty and realism options cranked up to maximum, *Apache* can be played as a hard-core simulation of the world's best attack helicopter, rewarding hours and hours of practice with an experience that feels extremely true-to-life. On the other side of the coin, novice air-combat pilots — or those who simply enjoy a good shoot-'em-up — can reduce the difficulty level until *Apache* plays like a fast-paced, no-holds-barred arcade-action game.

Take that versatility and add impressive Super VGA graphics, multi-player options, and a highly detailed campaign mode, and you've got a sim package that's hard to beat. Interactive Magic only published their first titles in 1995, and already the North Carolina-based company is building a reputation for quality sims. It'll be interesting to see what they bring us this year.

Best Strategy Game

Command & Conquer

Developer: Westwood Studios
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
18061 Fitch Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 874-4607



Not only is this real-time combat title the best strategy game we played last year, it took a back seat only to *Warcraft II* in the Best Multi-Player Game and Game of the Year categories.

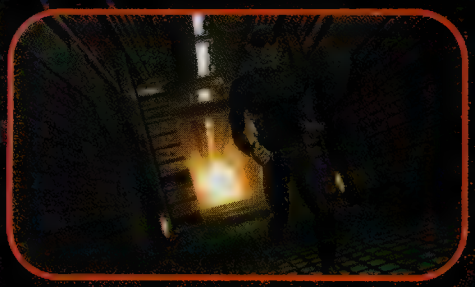
Based on Westwood Studios' *Dune II*, which basically kicked off the whole real-time strategy genre, *Command & Conquer* pits the noble Global Defense Initiative against the terrorist organization known as the Brotherhood of Nod. It's a fight for nothing less than world domination, fueled by greed for a mysterious new energy source known as tiberium — and you can play either side! (More likely, you'll want to play *both* sides, since GDI and the Nod both have their own complete campaign games, and finishing one campaign will only leave you wanting more action.)

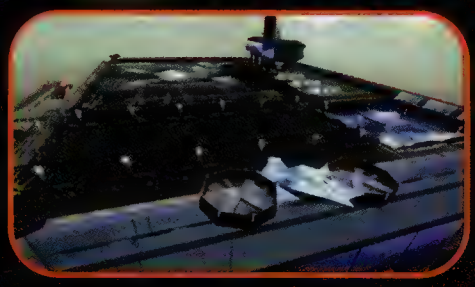
With multi-player options that let as many as four gamers go head-to-head-to-head-to-head, plus some terrific animated cut-scenes, great sound effects and a rocking musical score, *Command & Conquer* belongs in every strategy gamer's library.

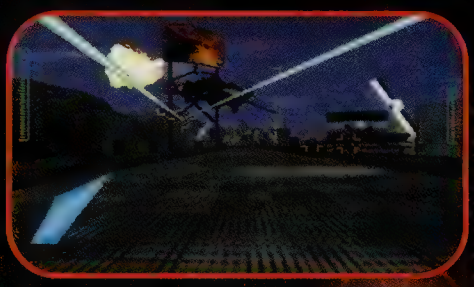
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CYBERIA²
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Product Information Number 177

Best Sports Game

Virtual Pool

Developer: Celeris
Publisher: Interplay Productions
17922 Fitch Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 969-4263



Virtual Pool was elegantly simple and endlessly playable.

This one has a pretty big supply of multimedia flash, with its full-motion video clips on the history of pool, plus tips and trick shots executed by champion shooter "Machine Gun" Lou Butera. But that's not what made it the best sports game of 1995.

It was *Virtual Pool's* elegant simplicity that persuaded us to call it the best game from what turned out to be a very good year for sports sims.

Before the multimedia material was added, an early version of *Virtual Pool* would have fit on a single floppy disk. And we're talking about everything: Super VGA 3D graphics; jaunty pool-hall music; true-to-life sound effects; multi-player support; and the most uncannily realistic physics we've ever seen in a PC pool game.

And yet, as small as the core of *Virtual Pool* was, it provided huge entertainment value. For weeks after its release, the sounds of pool balls clacking together and dropping into the pockets was about all we heard in the *PC Gamer* office, and *Virtual Pool* is still a big hit around here.

Best Wargame

Steel Panthers

Developer: SSI Special Projects Groups
Publisher: SSI
675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800



Steel Panthers was a realistic depiction of tactical-level c

The tighter the scale of a PC wargame, the harder it is to design. It's one thing to let gamers move whole fleets and divisions across a map of the world — it's another task entirely to drop down to the tactical level, where you're dealing with individual tanks, guns, and infantry squads. Leave it to Gary Grigsby (the creator of classics like *Kampfgruppe*, *Second Front*, and *Pacific War*) and SSI's Special Projects Group to tackle the job — and to succeed in style.

That *Steel Panthers*, a World War Two-era tactical game, works at all is an impressive achievement; that it works so very well is what earned it our award. Underneath the attractive terrain graphics and convincing sound effects is a very solid wargame, with sharp, realistic enemy AI and an easy-to-learn interface. Topping it all off is a roll-your-own scenario editor which lets you use the game's detailed database of more than 200 types of armor and 120 weapons to create just about any battle you can imagine. This is easily one of the best tactical simulations ever developed for the PC.

And How Could We Forget...

Naturally, there were quite a few excellent games that *almost* wound up with the pulse-pounding honor of receiving a *PC Gamer* Award. We'd hate to see those games go unrecognized, so here are our runners up for 1995. Each of these games is a gem in its genre, and well worth your gaming time and money.

Game of the Year
Command & Conquer, Virgin
Crusader: No Remorse, Origin
FIFA Soccer '96, Electronic Arts

Best Action Game
Crusader: No Remorse, Origin
Dark Forces, Lucas Arts
Descent, Interplay

Best Adventure Game
Bioforge, Origin
Full Throttle, Lucas Arts
Ripley's Believe It or Not: The Riddle of Master Lu, Sanctuary Woods

Best Arcade Game
Full Tilt Pinball, Maxis
Mortal Kombat 3, Acclaim

Best CD-ROM Enhancement
Harpoon II Deluxe: Multimedia Edition, Capstone

Best Educational Product
History Through Art, ZCI
Kid Phonics, Davidson
Kids World, Bit Jugglers

Best Multi-Player Game
Command & Conquer, Virgin
Descent, Interplay

Best Simulation
EF2000, Ocean
Capitalism, Interactive Magic
Flight Unlimited, Looking Glass Technologies

Best Strategy Game
Caesar II, Sierra
Heroes of Might and Magic, New World Computing

Best Sports Game
FIFA Soccer '96, Electronic Arts
NHL '96, Electronic Arts
Tony La Russa 3, Stormfront Studios

Best Wargame
Battleground: Gettysburg, TalonSoft
Battleground: Ardennes, TalonSoft
Stalingrad, Avalon Hill

Special Achievement in Dialogue

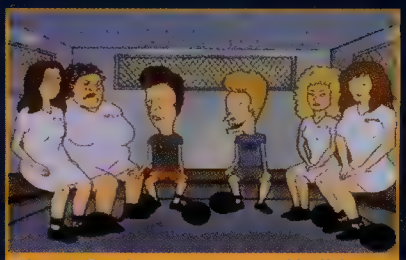
Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

Publisher: Viacom New Media

You probably think we're a little nuts for awarding *Beavis and Butt-Head* a special achievement in dialog, since, as anyone who's seen the MTV cartoon show or played the game knows, these boys aren't exactly known for their evocative prose. But the truth is, of all the dialogue we've seen this year, the only game that managed to have everyone on our staff rolling with laughter was *Virtual Stupidity*.

Who could forget that tensioned-filled moment when Butt-Head asks "Can I go when this starts to suck?" Or how about when Beavis discovers that "Air has a big schlong!" as the boys prepare to make a balloon-animal out of a condom?

Seriously, though, the quips weren't just very funny — the dialogue in *Virtual Stupidity* effectively set the tone for the entire game while remaining absolutely faithful to the television show.



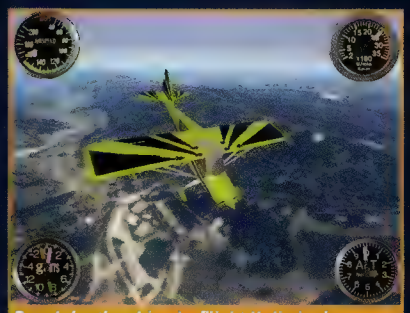
Hey, uh, Beavis, we won an award in dialogue or something." "Heh, heh — you said 'log.'"

Special Achievement in Graphics

Flight Unlimited

Publisher: Looking Glass Technologies

The graphics wizards at Looking Glass — responsible for such innovative and impressive first-person games as the Ultima Underworld series and last year's Best Adventure Game, *System Shock* — surprised everyone with the quality of their first-ever flight simulation, *Flight Unlimited*. While it requires the most sophisticated computer hardware on the market to be enjoyed, *Flight Unlimited* rewards gamers with some of the most stunning scenery ever seen in a flight sim.



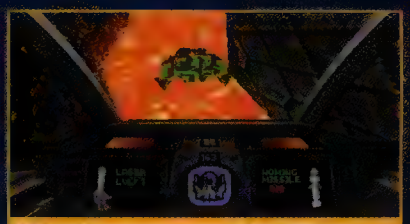
Reach for the skies in *Flight Unlimited*.

Special Achievement in Innovative Design

Descent

Publisher: Interplay

1995 was a remarkably innovative year for computer games, bringing full-motion video, stellar new graphics, and clever new designs to the table. But after carefully looking over the list of titles, it always came down to *Descent*. This futuristic shooter went beyond even *Doom*, giving you unprecedented, 360-degree freedom of movement, a truly three-dimensional environment to explore, and some of the most breath-taking, hair-raising head-to-head action this side of *Doom* itself.



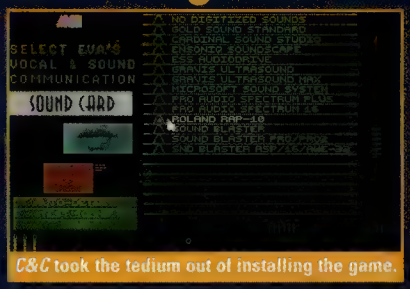
without question, *Descent*.

Special Achievement in an Installation Program

Command & Conquer

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment

When they designed Virgin's *Command & Conquer*, Westwood Studios proved that all installation programs are *not* the same. First, they made sure their program did what they all should (but frequently don't), like making sure you've got enough room on your hard drive; leading you through the configuration of your sound hardware — and letting you test it before you try to run the game. Then they added graphics and sound effects that made the whole procedure fun to watch. Westwood clearly put as much thought into *C&C*'s installation program as some developers put into a whole game.



C&C took the tedium out of installing the game.

Special Achievement in Musical Score

Full Throttle

Publisher: LucasArts

Music is an element that often gets overlooked in game development, but it can be every bit as effective as flashy graphics or fast-paced action.

LucasArts, who've always been known for their stellar production values, pushed the sonic barrier to the limit with their hard-rockin' adventure, *Full Throttle*.

By bringing in the Gone Jackals, a down-and-dirty rock-and-roll band, LucasArts was able to deliver just the right musical score to accompany their rough-and-tumble action hero Ben throughout his biker adventure. From the catchy opening song to the crunchy closing riffs, *Full Throttle* showed the world that every game can benefit greatly from a good musical score.



LucasArts chose just the right mix of music for *Full Throttle*.

Special Achievement in Sound

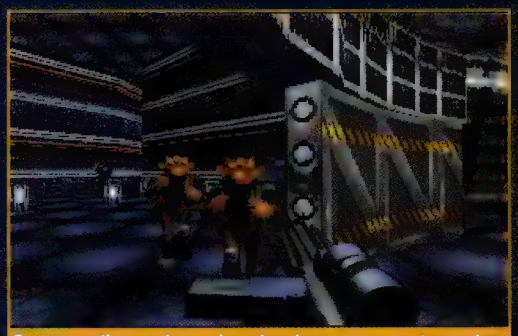
Dark Forces

Publisher: LucasArts

After listening to dozens of games filled with simple, off-the-shelf beeps, buzzes and bangs, we've come to understand that creating effective and realistic sound effects for a computer game is no simple task; it takes as much thought and effort as any other element of game design.

And if your game is based on something as instantly recognizable as the legendary Star Wars universe, getting the sound right becomes even more important.

The attention to detail that went into *Dark Forces*' sound effects was evident from the moment we first ran the program. Blaster fire, shouting stormtroopers, and weird machine noises were just a few of the painstakingly accurate sound effects that helped pull us into the game and made *Dark Forces*' sound stand out from the crowd.



Get yourself a good sound card and some surround-sound speakers and really turn up the volume on *Dark Forces*—your neighbors will thank you.

Special Achievement in Tutorial Design

Capitalism

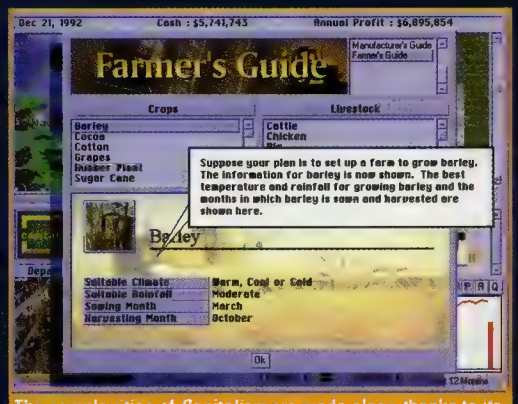
Publisher: Interactive Magic

There's nothing more frustrating than firing up a hot new game, getting stuck immediately, and then discovering that the manual is a hefty brick of hopelessly incomprehensible instructions.

That's why we've included this special achievement award in tutorial design. Complex games need to have clear and effective documentation, whether it takes the form of a manual, a tutorial, or an online help file.

The tutorial for Interactive Magic's *Capitalism* deserves to be singled out; it's by far the best of the year. A tutorial this complete and user-friendly should come as standard equipment with every complex simulation.

Capitalism's tutorial shows you how to get started by using the actual game to demonstrate the basics, while a narrator's patient, digitized voice explains what's going on. You can actually get well into *Capitalism* without ever cracking the manual — and considering how complex the game is, that's quite an accomplishment.



The complexities of *Capitalism* are made clear, thanks to its outstanding online tutorial.

Solving the Mystery means Visiting the Dark Pit of your Soul.



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TEEN T AGES 13+

PC CD ROM

PlayStation

SEGA SATURN

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Acclaim entertainment inc.

Let The Games



February 1996

WIZARDRY GOLD

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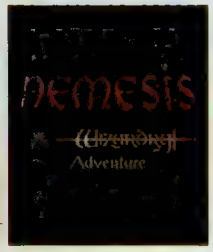
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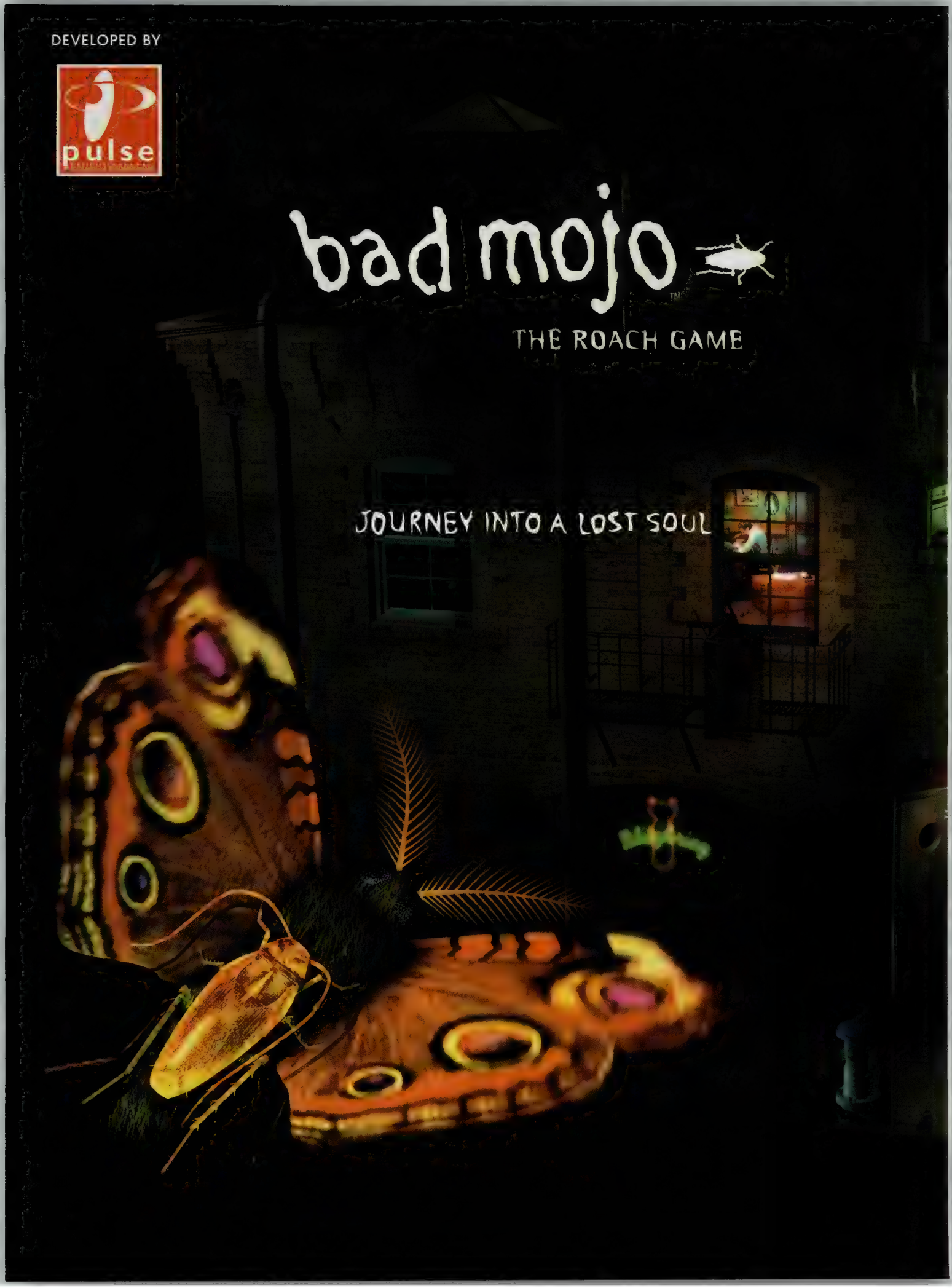


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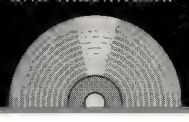
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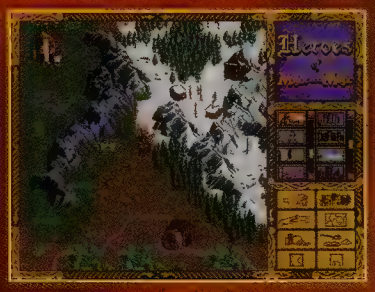
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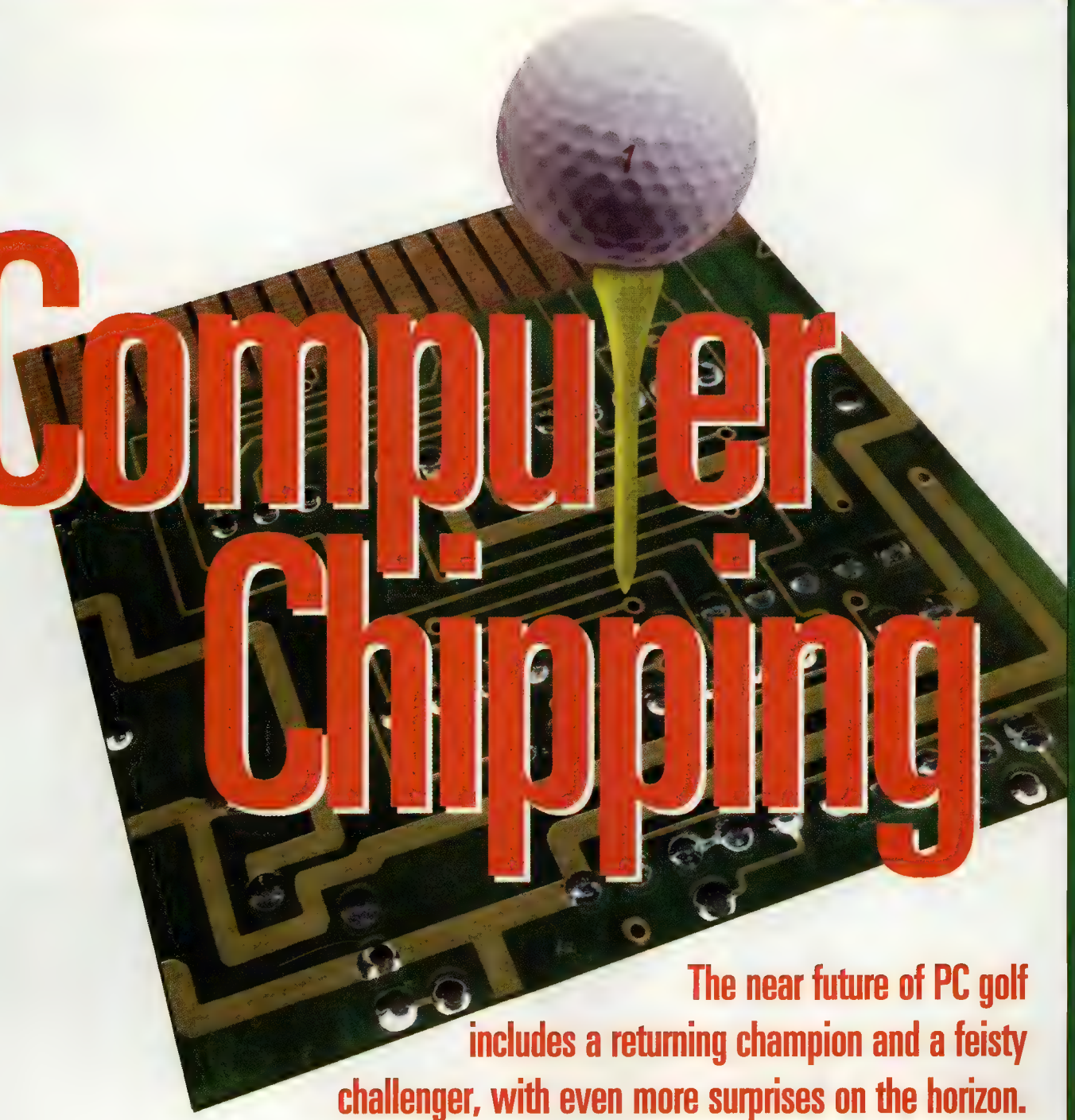
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Computer Chipping

The near future of PC golf includes a returning champion and a feisty challenger, with even more surprises on the horizon.

By T. Liam McDonald

Golf is the world's most metaphysical sport. Oh, the baseball crotch-scratchers might argue differently, but even baseball fans can't claim the sheer mania that infects those bitten by the Sport of Physicians. They wax poetic about the "inner game" of golf, about the profound sense of personal peace to be found on the links, about the *gestalt* of the experience. The Japanese are so obsessed, they even created a Goddess of Golf.

Golf has become one of the leading categories in computer game publishing, with half a dozen titles out already and another half dozen set to come this year. In sheers numbers, golf games actually outsell flight sims. (No, really.)

Why?

Golf sims, at best, can only — kinda, sorta — replicate a *feeling* of the experience of golf. Most, which use a power bar to determine the strength and accuracy of each swing, don't require more exertion and manual dexterity than it takes to click a mouse button three times consecutively. So why do people flock to them so much? Why do I play every *Links 386* course as it comes out? Is it some mania?

Bruce Carver has an idea, but then again he should: he's president and co-founder of Access software, publisher of *Links* and *Links 386 Pro*, two of the most successful PC games ever. Let him explain it:

"For the guy who golfs, and all of us at Access are avid golfers, the golf experience is, first of all, impossible to do on the computer," Carver says. "But the experience is more than just hitting a ball around a grassy area and knocking it in the hole. There's so much of nature in it and so much hand-eye coor-



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dination: it's a very complex experience. A lot of it is very frustrating, but a lot of it is very gratifying, especially on a beautiful day. When you happen to hit that perfect drive, and the wind's not blowing, and the birds are chirping, it's like a spiritual experience. So trying to give people as many of those elements as we possibly can through a computer is what our goal is about."

That sounds right to me. As co-designer of all the *Links* incarnations, Carver has been trying to push the technology further towards this ideal. And with the forthcoming *Links LS 1996*, he's taking one astonishing giant step closer to his goal.

The Legends of Sports

Access was founded in 1982, and in 1984 released their first title, *World Class Leader Board* for the Commodore 64, which went up against the first computer golf game, *Mean 18*. The terrain was pretty flat, and only holes were modeled at first. Access decided to try to render an entire course in the machine at once, the idea being that they would do such a good job that all the great courses would be banging on their door to be simulated. When better systems allowed them to create a decent terrain-rendering system in 1989, *Links* was born, and then, with the advances in color rendering and processing speed, *Links 386 Pro* came along in 1992.

For the last two years, we've heard talk about a *Links Pentium*, but Intel proved too fussy about the use of their Pentium trademark, and so, after many title changes, Access has settled on *Links LS 1996* for the mean time (the "LS" stands for "Legends in Sports"). *Links LS* is such an embarrassment of gaming riches that it's hard to know where to begin.

For three solid years, *Links 386* has been the standard by which other PC golf games are measured, which shows exactly how far ahead of the technology curve it was when it came out. But Electronic Arts' PGA Tour series is catching up, and other contenders are entering the ring, so the timing for the long-awaited *Links LS* couldn't be better. Carver sat down with us to discuss just what Access has been up to in their Utah offices in between working on the new course disks they've released bimonthly.

"We've been spending a great deal of time over the last three years developing new technology, and we're now finalizing the latest and greatest version of *Links*," Carver said. "We don't much look at our competition to see what they're doing, since we have our own goals. But the computer is just getting to the point where the power is there — and of course we keep pushing it — to help us give people more and more of what the actual experience is. It's a very complex experience, and one of the most important elements is the course itself. The engine is really only a means to an end; it's what we use to present this course. When we go play a beautiful course like Pebble Beach, we have just incredible experiences, and what I'm trying to do is give people that sense on a computer and then, if they can, encourage them to go play the course."



Links LS **will work in much the same way as the original *Links* and *Links 386 Pro*, but it will feature 800x600 high-resolution graphics than can be scaled as high as 1600x1200.**



The new version of *Links* will break the 256-color barrier, using your SVGA card's high-color mode to display thousands of colors.

No other golf sim is even in the same park with Access in regards sheer volume and beauty of courses produced. Now, *Links LS* is going to take that one step further. The new game's engine will not only focus on the course, but also the amenities, in what Access is calling "The Resort Series." This series will feature "destination resorts" with numerous courses, and it'll offer not only the links, but also the clubhouses, hotels, and other structures. Using their *Under a Killing Moon* technology, gamers will be able to walk around the lavish clubhouse in real time, in a 3D world, and examine various memorabilia or even go into the pro shop.

The first resort, which will be included in the new release, will feature all three courses at Kapalua on Hawaii's island of Maui. (And if time doesn't allow all three courses to make it to the release, Carver says the third course will be offered as a free upgrade when it's ready.) There will also be a fourth course included in the initial release (which may run to four CD-ROMs by the time it's ready) — and that course is the key to another important feature of *Links LS*.



Virtual Arnie

That fourth course is Latrobe, in Pennsylvania, the home course of golf legend Arnold Palmer. Like Kapalua, Latrobe will also be modeled in full, with a multimedia look at its rich history and a virtual tour of the facilities, including Palmer's club-making shop and library. Palmer and his co-designer at Latrobe, Ed Seay, sat for extensive interviews about the course. And since a round at Latrobe wouldn't be the same without Arnold Palmer as a partner, Access worked hard to make sure he helped put the "Legend" in "Legends in Sports."

For *Links LS*, golfer animations have taken a giant step forward. Access began by spending $50,000 on a motion-capture machine so they could create computerized golfers at very high

The Competition

Naturally, the forthcoming games from Access and Headgate won't be without rivals. The leader board includes some current hits, some intriguing future titles, and one that's gone missing.

PGA Tour 96 (Electronic Arts)

EA's PGA Tour series is clearly the current leader, offering multiple types of play, actual your players, and a good engine. Producer/Designer Steve Cartwright had a few words to offer about the future of the series: "We'll continue to improve the core product, and also start to branch out the way other companies have done," he says. "We'll provide a new course with some new players, and maybe a new tournament type. Right now, *Links* has a better system, with all the add-on courses they offer. But I feel we have a better core product, and we want to build on that. We're working on modem play, and ideally we'd like to offer a tournament where you could play with 100 other people anywhere in the world."



EA's excellent *PGA Tour 96* challenges *Links 386 Pro* as the finest golf sim on the market.

Jack Nicklaus Golf (Accolade)

At press time, things didn't look good for Accolade's strong *Jack Nicklaus* series, which was unique in that it offered a good course designer as well as a solid sim. Accolade was allegedly almost completed with a new version when the project was abruptly canceled. For now, Accolade is mum on what did the distinguished series in, although they are saying that it was *not* a licensing dispute with Nicklaus himself.

Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf (Grolier/Friendly Softare)

This one came out of nowhere, but this deceptively simple program has some good aspects to it. Graphics are good, and dozens of statistics related to swing go together to create golfers' profiles. Although it's far from a full-featured sim, it still has some good elements.

Picture Perfect Golf (Lyric)

An appalling little program that uses still photos and has absolutely no options. A simple power bar makes a ball fly into the picture, seemingly from out of nowhere, since there's no onscreen golfer.

Untitled Golf Sim (Looking Glass)

Looking Glass's strength lies in the fact that they are far ahead of everybody in the development of a "real-world physics" engine. This, coupled with the fact that the designer of *Mean 18* — the man who invented the power bar used in all the current sims — is at the head of the project, make it one to watch for in late 1996 or early 1997.



Links LS's incredible new graphics technology makes some amazing visual effects possible. Here, a heavy fog adds to the realistic feel of an early-morning round of golf.

graphic resolutions and with more elaborate animation. Golfers now waggle, step back and take a practice swing, and even jump when a shot goes in. In addition to Palmer, two male and two female golfers were captured and fully rendered in 3D. The downside of these virtual golfers is that so much went into rendering them that any animations the user wants to see must be loaded onto the hard drive rather than read from the CD-ROM. That's about 25MB eaten up per golfer for full animations, but with some features turned off, this can go as low as four megabytes.



Like *Links 386 Pro*, the new version of Access' classic will let you open multiple windows on the action.

And Palmer isn't the only pro who will be part of what Access is calling the Tour Pro Series. Though Access isn't ready yet to release more names, Carver plans to release an add-on disc with a new "Legend" golfer, his home course, interviews, and a virtual clubhouse tour, about every six months. This is addition to the six-month schedule of resort courses (Troon North is a possibility for the first set, and Pebble Beach and Sun City are two more Carver would like to see done) and the traditional bimonthly single-course disks, none of which will be backward-compatible with *Links 386*.

There will certainly be no shortage of world-class courses to choose from, since Carver golfs all over the world and even employs a full-time course acquisitions man, Zeke McCabe. McCabe's job is to attend the tourneys and golf on the best courses partly as a scout and photographer and partly to help raise awareness of the Links line and build relationships with course and tour pros. (Talk about your dream job!)

It's worked out well: course representatives now call Access to ask about being a future *Links* course.

Duffer's Paradise

But how much is the actual *Links* experience going to change?

Quite a lot, in some ways. While every feature of *Links 386* has been carried forward, it's all been streamlined, improved, and overhauled.

The word "links" comes from "linksland," the barren area between sea and farmland where the first courses were laid out.

The Links series has always been the most visually sumptuous of products, and the new game pushes the envelope even further. The 256-color limit is a thing of the past, as graphics move to full high-color graphics at 800x600 resolution, which can be scaled up to 1600x1200. Nothing less than a 2MB video card will suffice.

The entire game engine has been redone in order to accommodate more sophisticated, spline-based, texture-

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Actual IBM screen shots shown

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In *Links LS*, replays and reverse-angle shots will finally include golfer animations.

mapped terrain, with beautiful skies, clouds, trees, and extensive shadowing. As Carver points out, "We're just illusionists, and we want people to buy into the illusion and we don't want to disturb that. It's similar to playing any kind of game. The magic of a good game is getting a person immersed in this illusion and keeping them there. Don't screw them up with a bad interface so that every time they turn around their brain says 'I'm really just playing a game.' We spend a lot of time trying to create an illusion as close to the real thing as possible and keeping the person in it, so graphics are very important.

"Ultimately, we would like people to be able to move around the course in real time," Carver says. "But that's still a ways away, simply because we keep pushing the quality of the image up. Dynamic scenery, moving trees and water, are other technical hurdles way down the road. We hope to get that in the 1997 version."

As to the screen design, almost everything has been removed from the screen or changed in some way. What the gamer will see is a golfer a bit off to the left, shooting diagonally. To the right of the golfer is a very sharp-looking 3D power bar, which has been laid flat. Since high-color allows for transparencies, little transparent icons showing all information and functions you need can be placed on the screen or turned off as you like.

All the traditional views have been preserved, but now windows are completely scalable and can be configured however you like. Reverse angles and new side views also now show the virtual golfer (in *386*, the golfer was removed from the screen) , and the traditional top view has been completely rendered. You can also preview holes from different places on the course, and other golfers even show up on the course. When you're ready to swing, all of these can be removed to show the full-screen shot of the fairway. There are also more impressive ball flight animations and dense new 3D sound effects, from the sound of the clubhouse to the surf at Pebble Beach — all of which can be customized.

One thing they did have to give up, and one which Carver considers a "risky issue," is synchronized swinging. Before, your golfer moved with the power bar. Now, because of the elaborate golfer animation, you have to "pre-swing" by hitting the power bar, then watch as the swing is executed. Access wanted to give the gamer both, but found that trying to synch power bar and animation became too difficult. On the upside, now you can really watch those spiffy animations instead of keeping an eye on the power bar. "Some will miss it," Carver acknowledges, "and I expect some people to chew me out good."

One damning bit of evidence used at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots was that she played golf after the death of her husband.

Links LS 1997

Three years between versions was too long to wait. Since the last Links incarnation, everything has changed. One top competitor, Accolade's *Jack Nicklaus Ultimate Golf* is no more, EA's *PGA Tour* has emerged as the leader, and a number of aggressive developers are looking to claim a piece of the golfing pie. But Carver and his team don't expect to wait another three years. 1997 will see another Links incarnation as they continue to add features that didn't make the cut this time.

First off, although *Links LS 96* will install and run painlessly under Windows 95, it will not be a true Win95 application. The 1997 version will be.

And, while the 96 version includes different types of games, such as stroke play, match play, best ball, and skins, one big feature is still in the works: modem play.

"We wanted modem play and spent a lot of time on it, but we couldn't do it and ship on time," Carver explained. "Our plans for network and modem play are significant. I want the player to be able to look around and see his friends — but that will have to wait for the 1997 edition."

The Golf Club

Vance Cook is intimately familiar with the Links family of products; he began working at Access in 1986, converting the Commodore 64 version of *World Class Leader Board* to the Apple format. By modern standards, it was a pretty primitive program, but it was successful, and when Access decided take it to the next level, Cook got the job.

"I took that chance to rethink everything," he explains. "I thought we were at the point where we could do three-dimensional terrain. We switched from modeling a single hole to modeling the whole course, so if you hit off the fairway to the right a bit, that was where you ended up. On *Links*, I created the rendering engine and the ball dynamics, working alone for about a year. Then other programmers got involved, and in the end it became a good product. Consumers at the time were very patient; it was the 286 days, and we had 20-30 second redraws: the types of things we'd get lambasted for now. Even though we pushed it maybe too far, I think people were very intrigued by the new look of three-dimensional shaded terrain. They appreciated the fact that we pushed their machines, even though we probably pushed too far."

Cook helped push *Links 386 Pro*

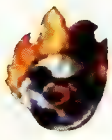


Headgate's *The Golf Club* is being developed by one of the principle designers of the first two Links games.

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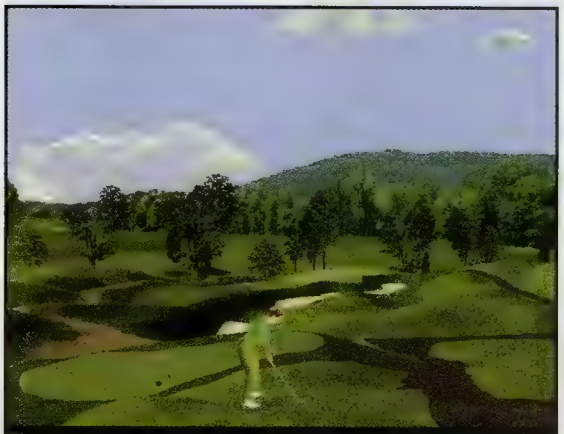
Headgate is working with legendary course designer Pete Dye to make sure the links in *The Golf Club* are authentic representations of some of the world's finest courses.



The Golf Club's animated golfers will be 3D models rendered in real time.

even further, then left Access to found his own company, Headgate. With his non-competition agreement with Access at an end, Cook is free to enter the golf sim world again with Headgate's debut game, tentatively titled *The Golf Club*.

"Golf is a perfect fit for a computer," Cook points out, "because we have the luxury of taking a great deal of time to render a scene, and then having relatively little animation compared to most simulators. We can produce a much better look than the flight sims, for instance, and that fits with golf, since a lot of the enjoyment of golf for people is getting out at the famous courses and being in the beautiful surroundings."



The most intriguing feature of *The Golf Club* will be the ability to control swing power and angle with the motion of the mouse.

Of course, even at their best, golf sims only give a user the look and feel of golf rather than the strategy or skill. But Cook hopes to move beyond that: "One of the things I really feel strongly about is that we need to push the other side of the experience as well," he says. "We want people to do more than just see the famous courses. We want them to get more of the level of control you have in other types of simulators, and we want you to experience the challenge of golf as well. We need to introduce more elements of control to the swing. Right now, if you can master the 'click-click-click' of the three-point swing, you can master the game."

King Charles I was relieved to hear news of the Irish rebellion in 1641: He was six shots down with eight to go, and had no chance of catching up.

The Complete Golfer

Headgate is now working to create a fully three-dimensional golfer. This golfer will be more than a movie animation: he'll be a "living, breathing" golfer that you control with your mouse. The golfer is linked to the mouse, so if you move the mouse, you can pull him across the screen, turn around, and so on. Taking a cure from *Virtual Pool*, *The Golf Club* uses the movement of the mouse to control power and aim. You control power by how fast you push the mouse forward, and control the swing plane by altering the path the mouse moves on. Draw the mouse back, and the club moves back; push it forward, and you swing. The path is quite important, since it controls hook and slice. It also more closely approximates the swing, since in the real world, ball direction is determined more by the path of the club than by the club face.

Although he plans to offer the option to use a traditional power bar for swinging, Cook hopes the unique twist of his new system will hook golfers.

"It's going to take more of an investment in terms of swinging the club and hitting the ball," he says, "so that people will be more inclined to develop that skill to improve their score. This is the aspect of our game that will make us or break us. It's the most bold — and, frankly, the most scary — thing that we're going to do. We've done this power-bar approach for the last decade, and I'm convinced that it's got to change. "

The Golf Club will use three-dimensional golfers rendered in real time, and offer the familiar array of reverse angles and perspectives. Approximately ten types of game will be offered, such as skins, best ball, scramble, and greens up, as well as both Ryder and Stableford scoring. Headgate also plans to go after the multi-player crowd aggressively, and they're programming in Win95 with hopes of drawing on the potential of DirectPlay to achieve this.

"People want two main things, I believe," Cook says. "They want a really beautiful course, and they also want to play against other people." As for the really beautiful course, Headgate is working with course-design legend Pete Dye to bring two of Dye's best courses to the PC: The Prince in Kawai and Pete Dye Golf Club in Bridgeport, West Virginia. They plan to continue working to bring other popular Dye courses to the PC as well.

Vance Cook and Headgate are moving into unfamiliar territory with their radical change in sim control. But anyone who plays golf sims knows the time is coming for a major rethinking of the standard engine. Golf has too many dynamics to ever be replicated properly on the PC, but a lot of the special elements that go into golf *can* be simulated today; it's just more difficult. Baseball and football both have elaborate management and strategy elements that ease their conversion to PC, but golf is one man alone with a club and the land itself. It's much more difficult to create, but Access and Headgate are taking two very different paths in order to get PC gamers as close to the golfing experience as possible.

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Somebody's going to get hurt

and it ain't gonna be me.

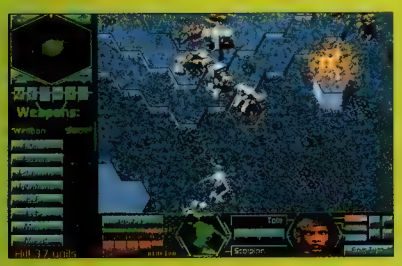
I've got you in my sights

and you look like a sucker.

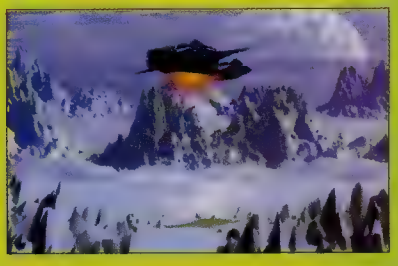
A puny little Cybrid sucker.

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Product Information Number 148


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'cause they don't know what hit 'em,
face like "Hey that's my arm!"...
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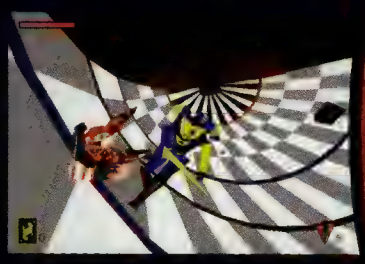
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Product Information Number 91

PC Gamer Leftovers

Every month, dozens and dozens of games pour into the *PC Gamer* offices, and more often than not we try our darnedest to review each and every one of them. But sometimes we have to sacrifice some questionable titles to review the really big games everyone's been dying to find out about, like *The Dig* or *Warcraft II*. So as a public service, it's time once again to update you on the titles that didn't quite make the cut, and that we probably won't be reviewing anytime soon.

Filibuster — Strategy/Action

You'll fight for your political life in *Filibuster*, a hot new political simulation from Porkbarrel Productions. This strategy title brings you all of the heart-pounding drama of floor votes, budget referendums, and the reading of the congressional record to a roomful of empty chairs. Your mission: Tack on an amendment to pending firearms legislation that will give each and every American the right to drive their cars on the sidewalk. How long can you hold the floor before the Speaker of the House calls in the Marines?

U.S. Navy Recruiters — Graphic Adventure

With the fall of the Soviet Union, enrollment in the U.S. Navy has sunk to an all-time low, and only Chief Petty Officer McGraw can save the day. You assume the role of McGraw in this thrilling new graphic adventure as you investigate a mysterious drop in the number and quality of new swabbies. You've got your quota, now go out there and get a few good men!

Lawn Darts '96: The Deadly Game — Sports Sim

Lawn Darts, the popular children's game from the 1970s that gave your parents night-sweats, bursts into the 1990s as an action-packed computer game. Now you can finally revel in the mischievous joys of flinging these brightly colored projectiles at anything your heart desires. Realistic graphics and terrific sound effects bring to life the experience as you master your throwing technique in scenarios that range from Miss Your Little Sister and Tabby Terror, to Neighbor Kid and Mr. Johnson's Head.

The Magic Hero Adventure Quest Trilogy — Fantasy RPG

You play Bobbit, a young hero who lost his family to the evil undead-wizard-dragon-goblin Uggo, and must now hike to the Seven Extremely Distant Places to reclaim the Mighty Mysterious Magic Things, and then battle through the thirty eerily identical levels of the Dungeon of Lost Keys, where you will finally engage the evil Uggo (and the game designers) in hand-to-hand combat with a tire iron.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

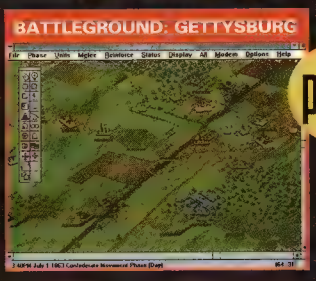
39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

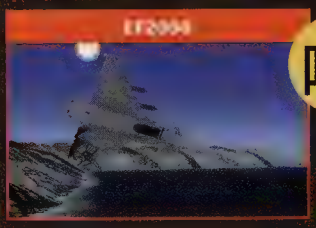
Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.



p.146



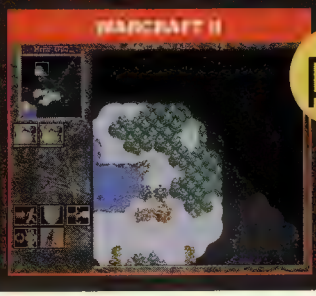
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p.124



p.133



p.96

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Category: Strategy

Developer: Blizzard

Publisher: Blizzard, 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 26MB Hard-drive space; Mouse; SVGA	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 16MB RAM; Windows 95; Supported sound card

Warcraft II earned PC Gamer's Game of the Year Award for one simple reason: It kicks ass!



Handsome cut scenes introduce each new chapter and set the stage for the action to come.

There is a simple (and some might say unpleasant) truth: Gamers like bashing the crap out of little things on screen. Most of us started with the simple pleasures of coin-op shooters, then moved on to PCs, where we started to gobble up *Doom* and *Heretic* and *Dark Forces*. And if those didn't satisfy our craving, we'd head over to the heavier stuff, like *Command & Conquer* or *Steel Panthers*. And as more gamers get into strategy and wargames, we can at least pretend that we're playing something akin to chess, or some other thinking man's game — while we are, in essence, killing things.

But when I watched a hulking Ogre stomp a Footman *flat* in *Warcraft II* (reducing him to a red splotch like a slow opossum on the white line), I knew I'd found a game that had just about everything. There was strategy (building villages, managing supplies), warfare (land, sea, and air), magic, and good ol' fashioned blood-n-guts, just like mom used to make. It only took a little time for me — as it did for Dan, Todd, Joe, and the rest of us at *PC Gamer* — to know this was, indeed, the most *entertaining* game published this year.

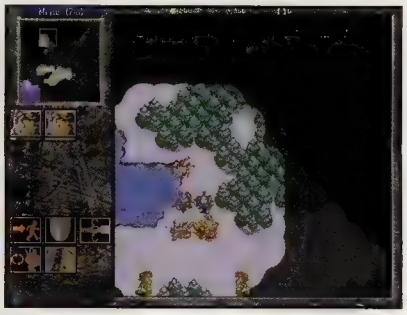
What makes it so damn hot? Let's start at the beginning. Blizzard's 1994 hit *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans* offered a fantasy wargame that set new standards for smoothness of play, invention, and sheer fun. The orcs and humans (you could play either) fought each other across a couple dozen scenarios of ever-increasing difficulty. Your units were isolated on an unexplored, blank map, and you had to gather resources, build an army, then charge off to find the enemy and kill them. You harvested gold and wood to create new units, and built and protected cities. The result was real-time strategy that felt almost like an action game, in which battles were won or lost by units pounding the bejesus out of each other until one was dead.

Warcraft II follows much the same pattern, only magnified to a wonderful new extreme. You see, the orcs enjoyed kicking human butt so much they built ships, crossed the sea, and now threaten the humans in their new home. As with the original, *Warcraft II* unfolds with a beautiful learning curve, introducing a few units per mission and giving you a very specific task to accomplish. These battles get progressively more difficult, and in turn the units at your disposal become more powerful and complex. But once naval warfare (including submarines), better units, and magic users enter the picture, things get tough fast. Towns must be protected with ever more elaborate towers, ports and oil derricks must be built (and protected) to allows ships to be built, spells must be studied, Gnomish inventors hired, and specialized missions performed.

Aside from new units, there are boatloads of other new developments for *Warcraft II*. First off, head-to-head play



The orcs face off against the humans in a showdown in the wastelands.

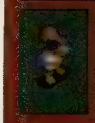


A small party of human footmen come upon some orcish grunts, and the battle is on.

IF YOU BUILD THEM, THEY WILL KILL

Whether you play as the Orcs or Humans in *Warcraft II*, you'll find that they have comparable units on each side. Since each unit is very different in the weapons they use and the way they attack, a careful study of their abilities will help you get a jump on deploying your forces.

PEASANT/PEON



The backbone of your operation, and also the weakest units. They harvest wood, mine gold, and build all the structures, but can also deliver a limited attack when things get rough.



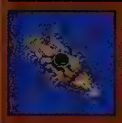
BALLISTA/CATAPULT



Assault weapons that can strike from long distances, with devastating results. Essential for siege warfare.



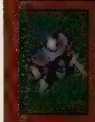
OIL TANKER



When sent to an oil patch, they can build a derrick, and then continously transport oil back to port.



FOOTMAN/GRUNT



The dogface. The grunt. These are your frontline troops early on, and build faster and cheaper than other combat units. Always handy in battle.



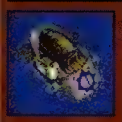
MAGE/DEATHKNIGHT



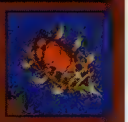
The Mage has a nifty bag of tricks featuring flame shield, lightning, fireball, invisibility and other spells, while the Deathknight can throw decay, whirlwind, raise dead, and other evil spells.



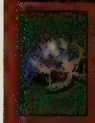
TRANSPORT



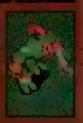
These are amphibious assault craft for delivering your troops across bodies of water.



ELVEN ARCHER/TROLL AXETHROWER



What they lack in armor they make up for in lethal long range attacks with arrows (for Archers) or throwing axes (for Axethrowers).



DEMOLITION SQUAD/GOBLIN SAPPER



Bomb-loving nuts who can demolish an obstacle and will go kamikaze if need be. Deadliest in large numbers.



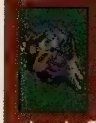
ELVEN/TROLL DESTORYER



Fast, well-armed seacraft, they can also strike at land and air targets.



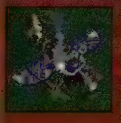
KNIGHT/OGRE



The biggest, meanest dog on the playground. Knights wield warhammers from the backs of their warhorses. Ogres are moving mountains of flesh with two heads. They'll pound just about anything into dust.



GNOMISH FLYING MACHINE/GOBLIN ZEPPLIN



This basic unarmed scout aircraft is your eye in the sky, and gives you important reconnaissance of the enemy camp.



BATTLESHIP/OGRE JUGGERNAUT



The well-armed and armored monsters of the sea for both the humans and orcs, they move slow but strike hard.



PALADIN/OGRE-MAGE



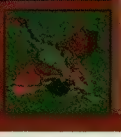
Paladins are an order of Knights with magical powers such as healing. Ogre-Mages are smarter than Ogres, and have nasty death magik spells.



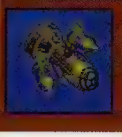
GRYPHON RIDER/DRAGON



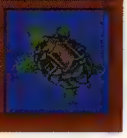
The fighter-bombers of the game, they deal death from above. They're expensive, but worth it.



GNOMISH SUBMARINE/GIANT TURTLE



Submersible craft, these can only be seen by towers, aircraft, and other submarines.





Here's the scenario builder, showing a winter terrain set. There are also forest and wasteland sets to help you build your perfect battleground.

has been increased to include eight players over a network, making for some days where just nothing gets done in the *PC Gamer* office. Graphics are full SVGA, with buildings and units each rendered in 3D and maps up to four times as large as those in *Warcraft*.

The mouse interface has been refined, allowing you to select up to nine units at once and order them to attack, move, or harvest without reaching for the keyboard. Slick cut scenes introduce each chapter, and there's full Windows 95 support. But from a design standpoint, the biggest addition is a complete terrain and scenario builder that works in Windows 95 (but only in Win95). This is an ingenious and welcome addition that gives *Warcraft II* an inexhaustible amount of replayability.

And, of course, there are those new units, most notably the sea and air units. No longer are you limited to carrying out battles on land with foot soldiers. With the addition of the Elven Destroyer, Battleship, and Submarine (Human units), or the Troll Destroyer, Ogre Juggernaught, and the submersible Giant Turtle (Orcs), things take a new turn. Both sides get troop transports as well, which are essential for the numerous amphibious operations throughout the game. And since oil is essential for naval operations, oil tankers, drilling platforms, and refineries become crucial to success.

Warfare on the high seas changes everything: enemies can be crippled by bottling up their harbor or nailing their derricks. Deciding where to land units and how to coordinate combined arms attacks becomes a crucial part of play. And that doesn't even take into account the subs, invisible beneath the surface as they raid shipping.

The addition of air units has a slightly lesser effect on play. Goblin Zeppelins and Gnomish Flying Machines are great for scouting but very vulnerable, while the Dragon and the Gryphon Rider, armed with potent weapons, can create some nasty surprises.

Warcraft II is utterly engrossing and compulsively playable. There's just no denying the simple fun factor of this game, which elegantly melds real-time action with careful strategies like few other games have. Only *Command & Conquer* comes close, and while folks will continue to argue the merits of one over the other, I think the added mission editor, better graphics, and sense of fun put *Warcraft II* ahead — although I'll happily continue to play both.

Once you pick up *Warcraft II*, you won't put it down again until you feast on the bones of the last infidel, whether he be Orc or Human. It's as engrossing as gaming gets.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

96%

HIGHS: Diverse and challenging play; excellent mission editor; technically superb head-to-head play.

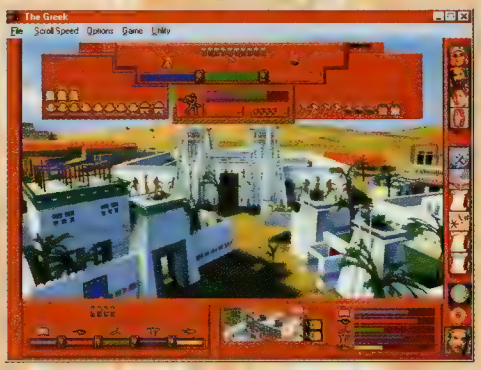
LOWS: There are the usual occasional holes in AI, but nothing serious.

BOTTOM LINE: Engrossing strategy fun for the whole family.

They Came.



They Saw.



They Kicked Some Butt.



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KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+

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Product Information Number 149

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Destruction Derby

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Racing

Developer: Psygnosis

Publisher: Sony Interactive, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space	Pentium; Joystick or steering wheel; Supported sound card

From start to finish, *Destruction Derby* delivers more smash-'em-up action than a bull in a china shop.

If those after-work traffic jams have left you cold, and you're looking for a little excitement to take the edge off, this could be your game. *Destruction Derby* is a wild dose of racing madness, with enough wrecks, smoke, and squealing tires to satisfy the demon driver that lurks inside all of us.

I spend most of my computer time behind a steering wheel, trying to take the checkered flag in serious sims like *NASCAR Racing* or *IndyCar Racing*, but Sony's *Destruction Derby* delivered so much hard-drivin' action that it pulled me off of the NASCAR circuit and had me locking bumpers with 3000 pounds of screaming metal within moments.

Usually, a driver's goal in a race is to avoid wrecks, but in *Destruction Derby*, wrecking your opponents is the name of the game.

Part of what makes *Destruction Derby* such a treat are the spectacular visuals that bring to life the most jarring collisions I've seen on a computer. Pieces fly from the cars as they slam together, and impacts send cars sliding very realistically. The damage is depicted beautifully, with dented doors and crumpled fenders that look just right.

But there's much more here than just eye candy; as you crash into your opponents, each car sustains damage, and their performance suffers. They don't steer as well; they lose speed, blow smoke, and overheat when the radiator gets smashed. Abuse them enough, and they finally sputter to a halt. By the end of a race, the track is littered with their twisted remains.



Car damage shows up beautifully, with dents, crumpled fenders, and smoke pouring from a smashed radiator.

To add a little variety to the action, you can choose from four traditional racetracks and The Bowl, an huge circle of asphalt where you slug it out in the Destruction Derby itself. Somewhat surprisingly, these demolition derbies are pretty realistic. You can't just mindlessly smash into other cars; this is thinking man's destruction. Too many head-on collisions, and you'll quickly smash your radiator; then it's only a matter of time until your ride quits running. To survive these wreck-fests, you have to throw it into reverse and hunt for something to hit.

This attention to damage is a nice touch of realism that adds to the otherwise unadulterated arcade fun. The downside to the arcade stuff is that, even when at the highest level of difficulty, it's no real challenge to win on any track. There's a points championship to be won, too, complete with a full field of opponents with wacky names. But like the individual races, it's too easy to win the series, even at the toughest difficulty level.

But these little problems aren't nearly enough to wreck the fun this game can provide. Kids — real ones, and older ones like me — will love *Destruction Derby*. It's easy to jump into the driver's seat and start racin' and wreckin', and the sheer fun of watching cars turn to smoking heaps is instantly addictive. I just don't want to be on the road when the kids who learn to drive from this game get their licenses.

—Lee Buchanan



Did you have a bad day? Then head for The Bowl and take out your frustrations in a demolition derby. No racing here, just survival of the fittest.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Great slam-bang action; modem and network play

LOWS: The computer opponents are pretty wimpy.

BOTTOM LINE: *Destruction Derby* is a blast, and a welcome change of pace from high-end driving simulations.

Police Quest: SWAT

Category: Adventure/Tactical Simulation

Developer: Sierra On-Line

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Supported sound card	Pentium; 16MB RAM

Part multimedia textbook, part shoot-em-up, *SWAT* plays more like an interactive "Cops" show than a graphic adventure.

Several years ago, Sierra brought a new level of intensity to adventure games by incorporating the procedures and dangers faced by America's law enforcement officers into their Police Quest games. Now Sierra has released the fifth game in the series, *Police Quest: SWAT*, but this time around, it's not a graphic adventure based loosely on real-life cases; instead, this is a tactical simulation of the day-to-day activities of the Special Weapons And Tactics division of the Los Angeles Police Department.

You start your career as the newest member of D Platoon, where you'll take part in the dangerous missions SWAT officers face on a daily basis. If you do well, you'll be promoted to the rank of Element Leader — the guy who calls the shots.

If you're interested in knowing more about this specialized division of the police force, *SWAT* provides a great way to take it all in; there are pages and pages on procedure and interviews with real-life SWAT sergeants, and virtually every mission is representative of what might be encountered out in the field. Unfortunately, for all that information on how to be a police officer, there's little to no information about how to successfully play the *game*.



The sniper missions are the simplest, if not the easiest — either you successfully shoot the suspect, or you don't.

Using technology similar to that in Sierra's *Phantasmagoria*, *SWAT* uses full-motion video of digitized actors placed in a computer-generated set. In this setting, you'll listen to your superiors instruct you with lengthy speeches and informative lectures. When you get out in the field on a call, you're given a chance to participate in the interrogation of witnesses, then you receive instructions from your sergeant. After that, the frustration begins.

The missions in *SWAT* rely very heavily on police procedure rather than on the kind of intuitive gameplay you expect to find in adventure games. If you approach each mission as part of a traditional game, you'll have no idea what to do next. Sure, you're ordered to reach a location or to cover a team member — but unless you've pored over the training manuals and passed all the exercises, in most cases you'll end up with a crazed civilian firing a gun in your face.



You can use a variety of weapons on the firing range, but the only real distinction between one and another is how many holes appear in the paper silhouette.

The problem is compounded by the fact that, if you fail a mission but survive, you'll get a lecture from your sergeant telling you nothing more than that you acted irrationally and not in the best interests of the team. And unless you sift through loads of procedural text and briefings, you're sure to repeat your mistakes and continue to stumble blindly through each mission. As a result, an initially exciting adventure quickly becomes a tiresome and frustrating reading exercise, as you try again and again to figure out what you're doing wrong. It's more like work than fun.

Police Quest: SWAT has a lot going for it, representing police procedures and situations in ways few of us have ever seen. It's got some great digitized video and special effects, and it even has some fairly decent acting. Unfortunately, what it gains in these areas is countered by the lack of good, old-fashioned fun. Only someone completely dedicated to learning the ins and outs of police procedure in Los Angeles would be tolerant enough to play *SWAT* for long.

— Mike Wolf



When you're on a mission, the game's view switches from a first-person to a third-person perspective. Here, a SWAT team makes an initial entry into a warehouse in response to shots being fired at other officers.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

70%

HIGHS: Good graphics, interface; the ability to choose multiple careers.

LOWS: Finishing a given scenario is tough.

BOTTOM LINE: The emphasis on procedure over gameplay brings an intriguing idea to a halt. Only wannabe police officers need apply.

The face that launched a thousand starships.

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"Visually rich— a captivating sequel!"
Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III, *Designers – Star Control and Star Controll II*







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ACCOLADE

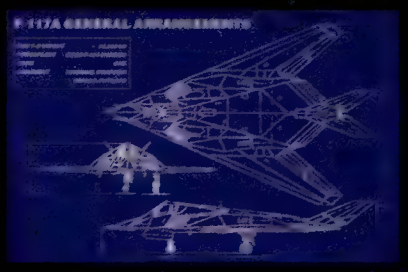
KIDS TO ADULTS K-A AGES 6+

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Product Information Number 85





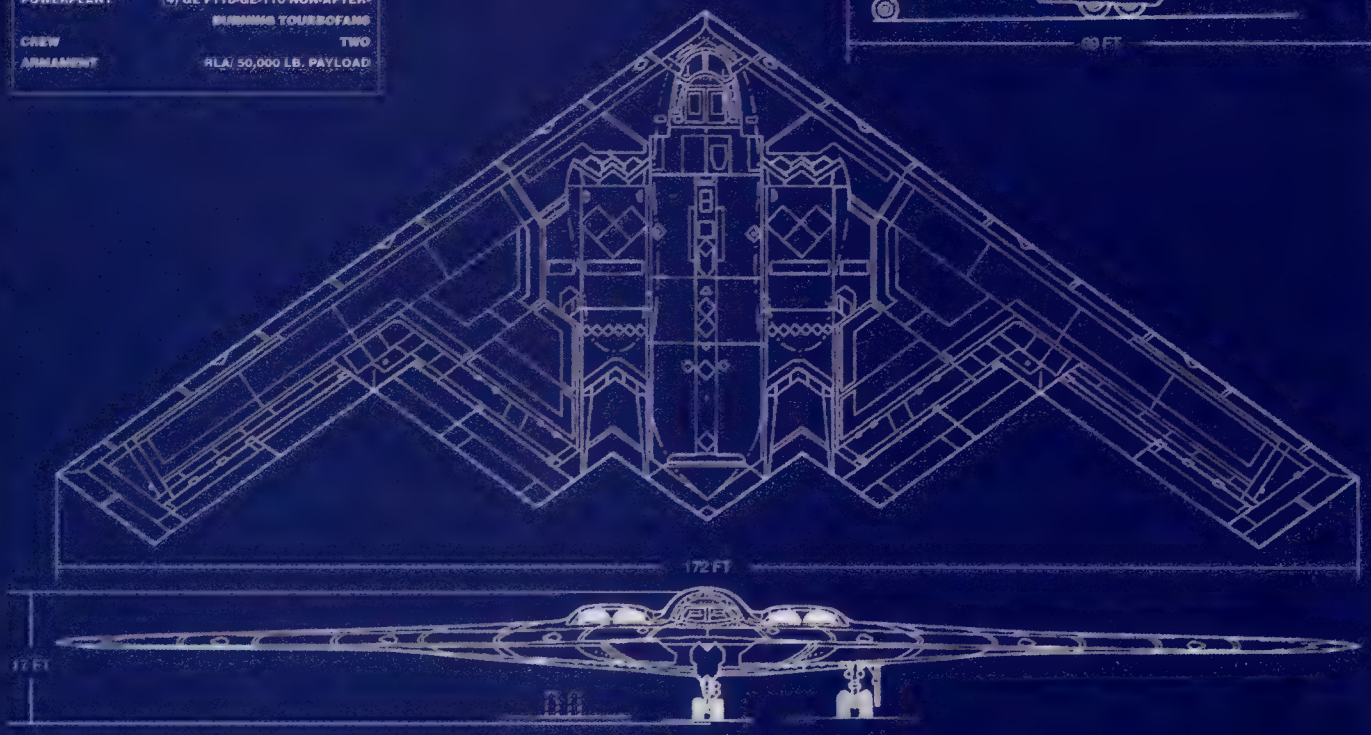


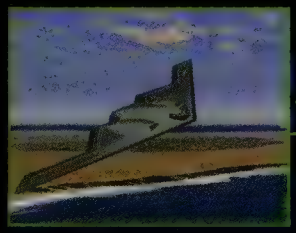
THEY'RE BEING BUILT TO DESTROY COUNTRIES THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST YET.

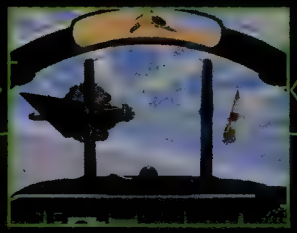
B-2A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

MAX T-O WEIGHT	376,000 LB
POWERPLANT	(4) GE F118-GE-110 NON-AFTER-BURNING TURBOFANS
CREW	TWO
ARMAMENT	RLA/ 50,000 LB. PAYLOAD







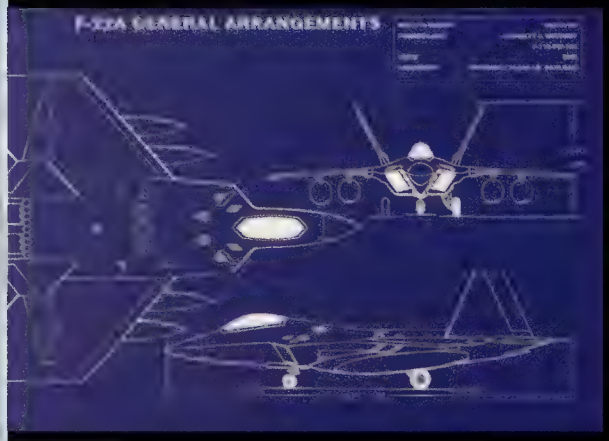


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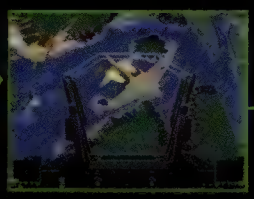


This simulation is based on exclusive, authentic and up-to-date information from Jane's Information Group (the world's largest publisher of military information). It includes a fully interactive Jane's All The World's Aircraft Guide with blue prints, weapons information, engine diagrams, and cockpit layouts. You can even pull up video footage of the actual fighters in test programs pulling the same maneuvers you pull in the game.



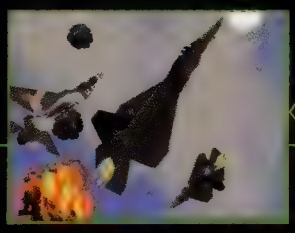
Be the first civilian to experience air combat in the advanced tactical [illegible] (the standard for simulations in 1995). Fly aircraft that are just starting Pentagon test programs.

89%
3.2 G
245
THR 100%



This is your opportunity to [illegible] U.S. tactical and [illegible]. Like the X-31's post stall maneuvers [illegible]. 16 scaleable resolution modes for maximum performance on multiple processor speeds (320 x 200 all the way to 1024 x 768).

ROUTE
645



Head-to-head network play or up to 8 players dogfight in [illegible] F-22's. Superior tactical force mapped terrain ranging from deserts to islands to cities.



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Product Information Number 107

Quarterback Attack

Category: Sports

Developer: Digital Pictures

Publisher: Digital Pictures, 1825 South Grant St., San Mateo, CA 94402 (415) 345-5300

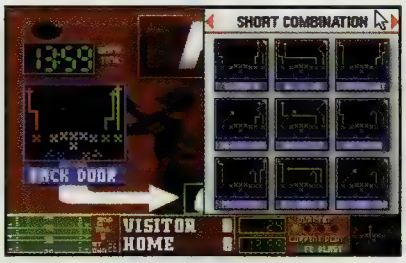
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; VGA; Supported sound card	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Local-bus video card; Mouse

This game offers a surprising level of interaction, but its limitations become painfully clear before you reach the fourth quarter.

It's no secret that Digital Pictures has been committed from the start to the idea of full-motion video as the basis for all of their games, and more often than not their previous titles have suffered from the restrictions of that medium, offering limited interaction and little replay value. But to their credit, their newest FMV offering, *Quarterback Attack*, is a substantial improvement over *Night Trap* or *Scotty Pippen's Slam City*. The bad news is that, for most fans of PC football games, that's just not good enough.

You play *Quarterback Attack* as a rookie facing his first game as starting quarterback, and it just so happens that this is The Big Game. After watching video of a kickoff and return, you'll select your choice of play (there are 110 in all — 100 passing and ten running), assign a snap count, then watch as the camera pans up and down the line of scrimmage. On the running plays, you have no control beyond the timing of the snap count; on passing plays, you see the action from behind the quarterback — until you hit a key to zoom in on a particular receiver and throw the ball. If you don't find an open man and return to the pocket view, you can take off on a scramble (i.e., a run up the field, dodging a little to the left or right to avoid tackles).

On the easiest difficulty settings (there are six skill levels in all), completing passes is simply a matter of clicking the mouse at the right time; on the higher levels, you actually have to lead the receiver by placing a target cursor — and it's here that *Quarterback Attack* works best. You can really get involved in the action as you read the defense and call audibles to take advantage of blitzing defensive backs.



Since all you do on running plays is bark out the snap count, it's only natural that there are ten times more passing than running plays in the *Quarterback Attack* playbook.

But the excitement soon wears off, for several reasons. The most glaring problem with *Quarterback Attack* lies in the video footage itself. Standard 320 x 200 resolution makes for a fairly grainy picture, and the solid-color uniforms worn by both teams scream high school football (or at least Division III). But the real problem is the amount and variety of the footage: chances are good that you'll see the same video clip more than once before the first quarter is out, and by the time you've played two or three games, you've pretty much seen everything *Quarterback Attack* has to offer in the way of visuals.

Then there's the problem of perception on the field: call a running play, and you could swear the guy rushed for five yards — until you see that it's second and eight. Hit a receiver on a deep post pattern after he's beaten his defender, and you expect him to cruise untouched into the end zone — but the defender always catches up with him. The on-field perspective that works so well when you're in the pocket and checking receivers just isn't the best angle for getting the full impact of the play (how often do you see the action from an on-the-field camera during a televised game?). Consequently, you can throw what appear to be four 40-yard bombs on a single drive — and end up only going from one 20-yard-line to the other.

Quarterback Attack is probably the most interactive video-based football game ever created, at least in terms of on-the-field action. Too bad it doesn't have the legs to last an entire season.

—Steve Poole



Here's what you see when you drop back to pass. This view lets you see oncoming pass rushers, but you can't throw the ball from here — you have to focus on each receiver individually to do that, leaving yourself open to be sacked.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Decent video and a straightforward interface; provides some challenge.

LOWS: You start seeing the same clips over and over; playing as the same teams get old fast.

BOTTOM LINE: *QBA* provides a few kicks, but the video-based format kills any replay value.

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Product Information Number 158

head ON™



{Talk}



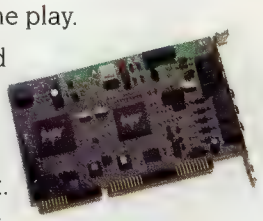
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Product Information Number 104

Worms

Category: Strategy/Action

Developer: Team 17

Publisher: Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St., San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411

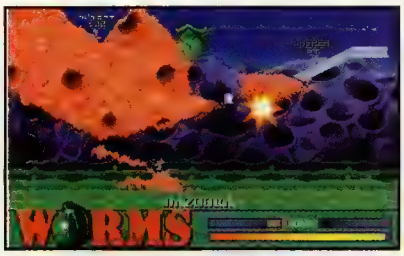
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386DX 33; 4MB RAM; Mouse	486DX66; Supported sound card

Don't let the simplistic look of *Worms* fool you; this isn't your standard *Lemmings*-style puzzler or run-and-jump action game. Instead, this humor-filled offering transforms the side-scrolling platform format into a turn-based action-strategy game in which you control a team of well-armed worms (what else?) and try to defeat as many as three teams of adversaries controlled by the computer or other gamers. It's a clever idea that's just far enough off the beaten path to attract those who've grown tired of more demanding strategy games, and humorous enough to entertain everyone else.

The rules for playing *Worms* are deceptively simple: During each turn, you move a member of your team as close as possible to your opponent, or into a position where he can do the most damage, then let loose with weapons that range from bazookas and shotguns to air strikes and dynamite. If you're successful, you'll be able to take away health points from your opponents before they do the same to you.

Believe me, it's much more fun than it may sound. Watching your little characters bomb, blast, and beat each other into oblivion is a great deal of fun, and more often than not, you'll find yourself laughing out loud at their antics. Score a direct hit, and your opponents fly across the screen, bounce down rocky hillsides, or plunge to a fiery death in lakes of lava.

Aside from the humorous elements, *Worms* has a number of nice touches; attractive cut scenes, randomly generated landscapes for almost limitless replay value, and user customizable options for each team that let you name each unit, assign more health points or weapons options, or configure the game for as many as 16 players on one computer.



Even though the main attractions are its humorous characters and cartoonish look, *Worms* is a fun little strategy puzzler that's great entertainment for multiple players.

Unfortunately, *Worms* didn't support modem or network play at press time; according to Ocean, a patch will be available to add those features.

But even with its limited multi-player capabilities, *Worms* should strike a chord with gamers who've been looking for a challenging and inventive alternative to more serious strategy offerings.

— Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Clever design, cute graphics, and loads of fun with more than one player.

LOWS: Turn-based action is a bit slow against computer opponents.

BOTTOM LINE: *Worms* is a humorous and enjoyable take on strategy games, and fun for the whole family.



If you've ever puked in your shoes, you'll love this game.

When you play Simon the Sorcerer II, puking in your shoes is just one of the many twisted little moves you'll make to survive an adventure filled with over 100 bizarre characters. Like woodworms, wizards, gargoyles, runts and washerwomen, to name a few.

And when you're not worshipping the old porcelain goddess, Simon's killer hand-drawn graphics, brain-scorching riddles and ear-pummeling, CD quality sound will be more than enough to keep you gagging for more.

Simon the Sorcerer II

So much fun it'll make you sick.

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Product Information Number 157

Knight Moves

Win95

Category: Puzzle game

Developer: Kinesoft Software

Publisher: Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (800) 695-4263

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Supported sound card

In Spectrum HoloByte's latest puzzler, *Knight Moves*, the age-old challenge of chess has been taken into new territory with the addition of a healthy dose of action.

Knight Moves challenges you to control an animated knight who leaps around a chessboard stocked with enemies, hazards, and power-ups. Your knight can only move in L-shaped patterns, as it would in chess, which means you'll need to plan ahead if you're going to avoid the hazards and collect the treasures. And, unlike chess, *Knight Moves* doesn't let you ponder your move for hours; the knight is constantly in motion, so you have only seconds to choose its next target square.

If this basic formula sounds familiar — abstract, spatial thinking backed by quick reflexes — it should, because the game is based on an idea by Alexey Pajitnov, the creator of *Tetris*.



Using the mouse, you select the next square your knight will jump to. Possible destinations are marked by blue outlines.

But *Tetris* is a hard act to follow, and *Knight Moves* doesn't have quite the same appeal. For one thing, the game takes place on a three-dimensional board rather than a flat screen; as you move around the playing field, parts of it are always hidden as some sprites move in front of others. This makes the knight harder to control than it should be, since you can't always see where you're sending it.

Constant play of *Knight Moves* might be of some small help in your chess game, since the knight is the hardest chess piece to learn to use effectively. But as an action/puzzler game, this one is more forgettable than fun, providing only modest challenge to avid puzzlers and frustration to novices.

— Jason Bates

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Interesting concept that mixes chess-style thinking with arcade reflexes.

LOWS: The 3D interface is awkward; the no-frills manual and lack of features makes this as slim as some shareware releases.

BOTTOM LINE: More fun than *Under Pressure*, or *Endorfun*, but it's not *Tetris*.

Full Tilt Pinball

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Cinematronics

Publisher: Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596-3572 (800) 336-2947

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486/66; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Maxis, the makers of the wonderfully diverse line of Sim titles, have taken a break from the city-building and budget-busting challenges of *SimCity* and *SimTower* and have decided to throw their hat into a very different category: pinball.

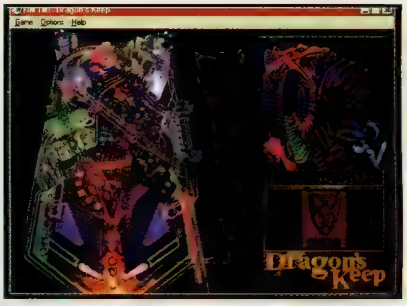
Their first (and, with any luck, not their last) pinball package, *Full Tilt Pinball*, is a surprisingly good one, delivering a lot of bang for the buck. With its realistic pinball feel, it even compares well to the almost legendary series of pinball games from 21st Century.

What makes *FTP* such a treat is the thoughtful design of the three tables included in this package. Ranging from the sci-fi theme of the Space Cadet table to the medieval fantasy of Dragon's Keep, each has the look and feel of actual stand-up pinball machines and comes filled with bumpers, targets, and ramps to shoot at, as well as special bonuses that hold your interest as you work your way towards each table's big payoff.

These big finishes are classic pinball challenges: Create a black hole in Space Cadet, or defeat a menacing dragon in Dragon's Keep, and they give *FTP* plenty of replay value.

The same attention to detail has been lavished on the physics of the game, as well, with believable ball movements throughout most of the game. You'll still notice a few gravity-defying quirks now and then, but they won't be enough to turn off pinball purists.

On the downside, *FTP* doesn't have some of the graphic options that other games offer; you can't adjust the screen size, so unless you have a really big monitor, the ball can be hard to follow at times. And for some odd reason, you can configure the flippers to be activated by anything *but* the left and right shift keys, which are probably the most comfortable and natural choices.



***Full Tilt Pinball* shows a great attention to detail, with tables that provide plenty of flipper-punching action.**

But that's easily forgiven; once you start slapping those flippers, *Full Tilt Pinball* provides hours of fun. Sure, it doesn't have the bells and whistles of some current pinball titles, but it certainly delivers what every pinball fan truly craves: fast-paced, realistic action.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Good sound effects; slick graphics and nice table design.

LOWS: Only three different tables; not enough graphic options for some.

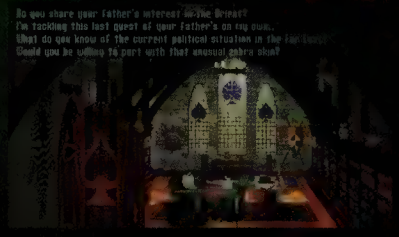
BOTTOM LINE: As pinball simulations go, *Full Tilt Pinball* is hard to beat — but there are still better ones out there.

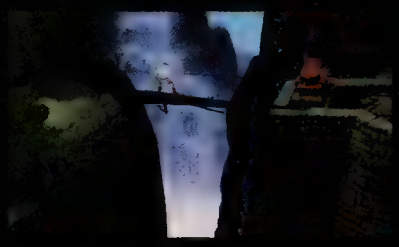
Ripley's Believe It or Not!

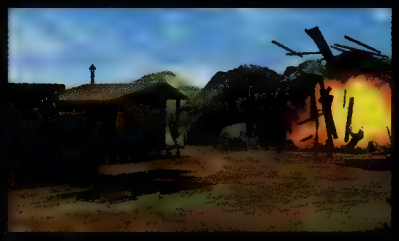
A two thousand year old mystery riddled with danger.











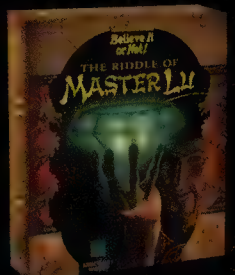
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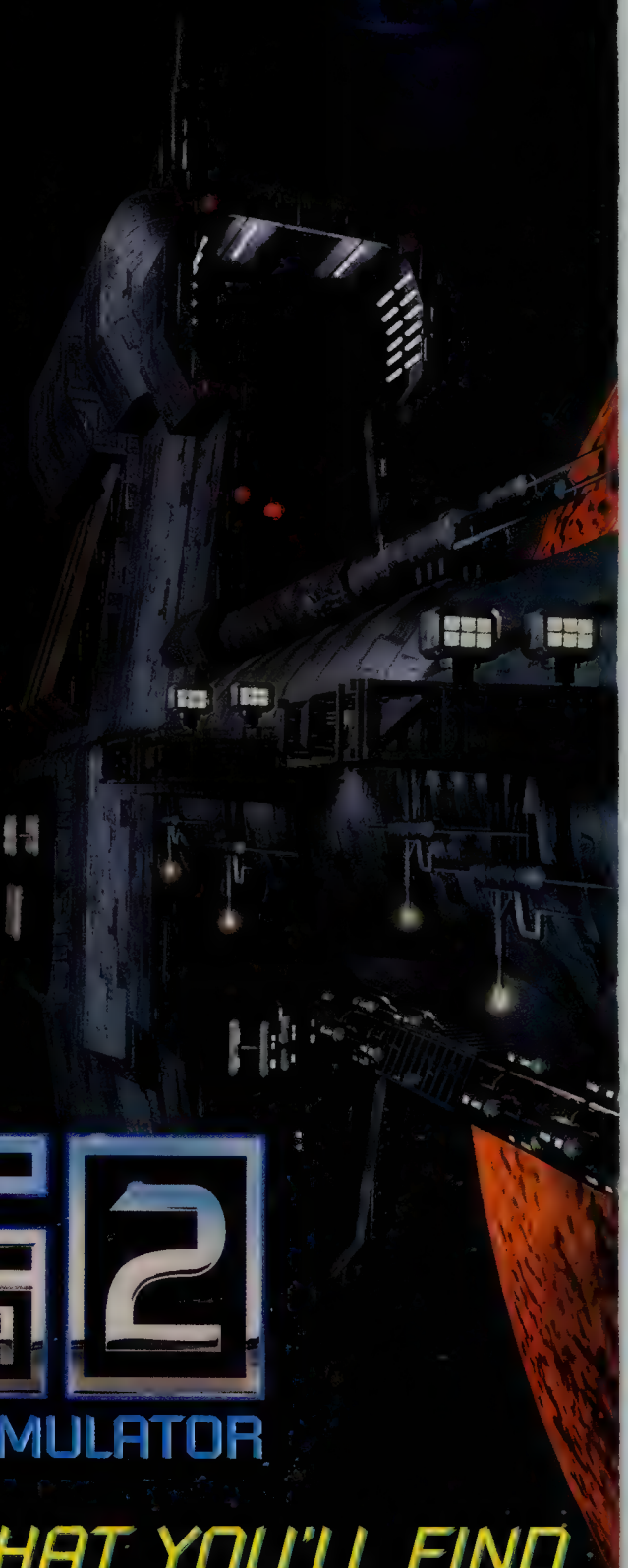
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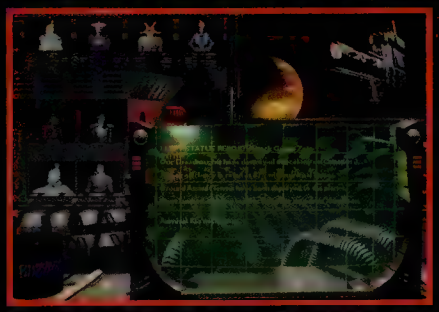
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Product Information Number 97

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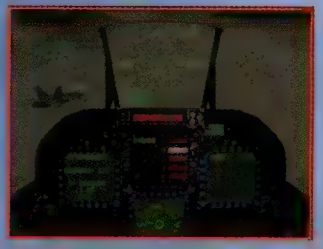
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PC CD-ROM

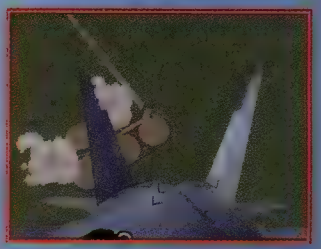
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Anvil of Dawn

Category: Roleplaying

Developer: Dreamforge

Publisher: New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood CA 90078 (818) 889-5650

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse	Pentium; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

While it's not original, *Anvil of Dawn* serves up enough hack-and-slash enjoyment to warrant a look from roleplaying fans.

A few years ago, Westwood Studios introduced gamers to *Lands of Lore*, a fantasy roleplaying game that offered a great story line, terrific graphics, and an interface that was as much fun for gaming veterans as it was easy for newcomers to use. Intent on building on their success, Westwood has been hard at work on a sequel, planning even more spectacular effects and graphics as part of the package.

Unfortunately, the slow development process for *Lands of Lore 2* has left fans of its predecessor out in the cold. But there's a little hope on the RPG horizon; New World Computing's *Anvil of Dawn* uses the same basic play mechanics as *LOL*, and features a solid story line that should keep everyone happy until the cavalry arrives.

Anvil doesn't waste any time getting started: After selecting your character from the five types available, you begin exploring a mysterious castle and soon discover that a dark warlord has taken a fancy to an object of immeasurable power and is preparing to use it against mankind in a coming war. Naturally, you're thrust into the fray, magically set behind the battle lines in order to stop this menace before it can spread its evil through the land.

Very traditional fare, so far. But as the game continues, you realize there's much more to your mission than meets the eye, and soon your quest takes on a deeper importance as you attempt to save your countrymen. Like *Lands of Lore*, *Anvil*'s story may not sound too original when taken as a whole, but the individual plot elements are well written and presented in an expert manner that is far superior to your average kill-the-bad-guy story line.



The court magician will teach you two spells before you leave the castle. Weaker characters may want to select the freeze spell for quick getaways.

The dark world around you is rendered in a cartoonish but effective style reminiscent of that of *Lands of Lore*. The visuals are passable, if not inspired, and give the player a fair feeling of what it's like to be in a land where evil is king.



Each of the five different character types has its own strengths in both combat and magic. Beginners may want to stick with combat-heavy characters until they get the hang of the controls.



The inventory screen lets you take a look at what your character is currently holding, and also allows access to spells and your journal.

Sound and voice acting are pretty much the same story, never distracting from the actual gameplay, but not enhancing it tremendously, either.



When you finish off an enemy, you'll be treated to a grisly death sequence and some truly impressive screams.

Appearances aside, though, it's the gameplay that players will appreciate. With *Anvil*'s completely intuitive, mouse-driven interface, would-be heroes can move through their world one step at a time, arming their character with weapons they find, as well as learning new magic spells and plundering treasure in a blend that sits somewhere on the scale between action games and puzzlers.

Aside from a well-written script, the game never manages to stand out as much more than a clone. In the end, *Anvil of Dawn* is best seen as fodder for roleplaying fans looking for something to tide them over while they wait for the blockbusters to come.

—Trent C. Ward

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

73%

HIGHS: An easy-to-learn interface and some solid, if mindless, roleplaying action.

LOWS: Mediocre graphics and sound effects; an almost complete lack of innovation.

BOTTOM LINE: An attractive and enjoyable RPG that doesn't stretch the boundaries very far.

Absolute Zero

Category: Space combat

Developer: Domark Software

Publisher: Domark Software, 1900 S. Norfolk St., Suite 110, San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-8929

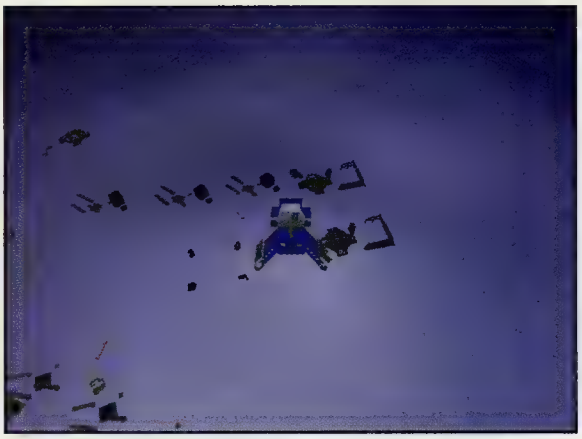
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; SVGA with 1MB memory	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 110MB hard-drive space; Joystick or gamepad

This game had the potential to breathe new life into the space-combat genre, but it's crippled by a frustrating design.

One glance at the box copy for *Absolute Zero* and it's clear what this game aspires to be: "Even veteran wing commanders will have trouble keeping their suits dry in this rocket-fast adventure." Well, the truth is that *Absolute Zero* is no *Wing Commander*; in fact, it doesn't even come close.

Then again, few games do. But what really makes *AZ* so disappointing is that it sets out to be much more than another *Wing Commander* clone — and it *almost* manages that, with its strong, gripping story line and innovative game structure.

The game is set in the 24th century, on the frozen Jovian moon of Europa, where mankind has established a colony to extract water for fusion reactors. When one of the mining facilities accidentally discovers members of a long-buried alien race, the creatures awaken to slaughter all the miners and destroy the colony's capital city. Using only the minimal defensive equipment located on the colony, it's up to you to thwart the attack until help arrives.



The shattered remains of Europa City, apparently destroyed by a highly advanced fractal generator designed by the aliens.

Each mission casts you as a different character in the unfolding drama, as you take the helm of seven different vehicles on a variety of missions. In the first mission, for instance, you fly a fighter-style craft on a mission to drop reconnaissance pods; in the second, you switch characters and operate a turret gun in a ground-based vehicle leading a search for survivors.

But as interesting as the premise was, *AZ* greeted me with frustration even before I'd gotten into the first mission. The problem arose when I tried to figure out how to configure the game for joystick control.

The manual casually mentioned joystick support, but gave no clue on how to activate it; both the Manual Revision booklet and the README file that came with the game referred to a Visor Control screen that could be accessed by moving the mouse cursor to the top left corner of the screen, but it simply didn't appear. I finally hit paydirt on the last page of the Manual Revision booklet, in a listing of miscellaneous keyboard commands. It was the key that brings up the Visor Control menu: F2. It took a good 20-30 minutes of poring over the manual before I was able to choose a joystick and fly my first combat mission.

The frustration quotient only grew once I got into battle. The game's design is very linear; you're doomed to replay the *exact* same mission over and over until you win it. That's bad enough, but what's more maddening is that it's quite possible to lose the same mission a dozen times, even following the hints you're given each time you fail. I finally read the step-by-step walkthrough included in the README file, and it *still* took two or three more whacks before I finally emerged victorious from that first mission.

The lack of a time compression or autopilot option means you'll fly long stretches between Navigation points, and after three or four tries at a mission you'll be praying for a Warp feature to zip you straight to the next bit of action.

There may be a point, many hours into *Absolute Zero*, where the hook finally sets, and you're magically transported from your computer desk to an exciting and action-packed world where the fate of mankind rests in your hands. But if that's true, the odds are that most gamers won't make it that far — and the ones who do may wonder if it was worth all the time and effort.

— Ned Gaskins



Learning to master the VR Helmet display is simple; figuring out why you keep losing the same mission over and over again isn't.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

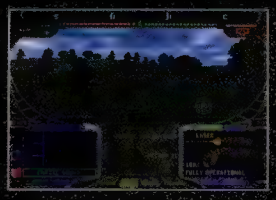
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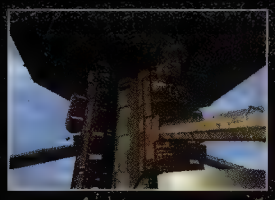
HIGHS: Playing as a variety of characters gives *AZ* depth; the story is well-written.

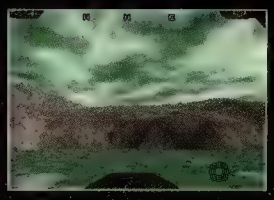
LOWS: Only persistent gamers will be able to deal with the linear gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: An exercise in frustration that will put off all but the most patient gamers.

You've Trained For This









A New World...

Product Information Number 128

Virtual Karts

Category: Arcade

Developer: MicroProse Software, Inc.

Publisher: MicroProse Software, Inc. 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245 (800) 879-7529

Required	We Recommend
486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Mouse	Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Driving wheel; Supported sound card

With *Virtual Karts*, MicroProse puts you behind the wheel of those agile, lawnmower engine-powered racers as they scream along at 100mph. But while this title is the first to attempt to simulate pro go-cart racing, it just doesn't have what it takes to compete with the better racing sims — or arcade games, for that matter — on the market.

There are plenty of options to tinker with in this game; you can pick your jersey and car color, tires, and even the weather. They aren't the kinds of *realistic* options you'd expect in a sim like *NASCAR Racing*, but at least they do give you something more to do than just run laps around the track.

And that's important here, because the gameplay is severely limited by oddball physics that make the driving action more chore than fun. The controls feel imprecise, and it seemed no matter how I tried I couldn't do much more than slip and slide around the track. And even when I did slow down enough to make a smooth turn, the other racers just flew on past me.

If you can get past the dodgy controls, you'll find enough variation from track to track to keep the laps interesting for a bit. But then the game's stiff system requirements kick in, making any machine but the fastest Pentium seem like an old 286. On the minimum recommended system, a 486/66, even the low-res VGA mode can become terribly slow during an actual race. The difference between qualifying alone on a track and racing with other drivers can be frustratingly drastic. The SVGA mode *is* beautiful — but almost unplayable.



The front view is best for keeping yourself on the track. It's possible to look over both your shoulders, but doing so might result in a slow-down as you crash into the sideline.

All in all, *Virtual Karts* just has too many flaws to be much more than a mediocre game. Sure, it's something different: but in this case, different ain't good enough.

—Michael Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Dodgy controls, high system requirements, oddball physics.

59%

LOWS: Menus are straightforward, network play can be fun.

BOTTOM LINE: Even if you're a fan of go-cart racing, you'll probably be disappointed with *Virtual Karts*.

You Don't Know Jack

Category: Trivia game

Developer: Jellyvision

Publisher: Berkeley Systems, 2095 Rose St., Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 549-2300

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486SX/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; 15MB hard-disk space; Sound card	Windows 95; 486/66; 16MB RAM

When's the last time you played a trivia game with categories like "If you can't beat 'em, lick 'em;" "Whatchya talkin' about, Willis?" and "'80s bands that can't accessorize"?

You'll find all these categories and more in this entertaining trivia game from Berkeley Systems, the company best known for their After Dark screen savers. The rules of the game are simple: Choose either a 7- or 21-question game, pick a category, and answer the multiple-choice questions by ringing in with your "buzzer" (an assigned key on the keyboard).

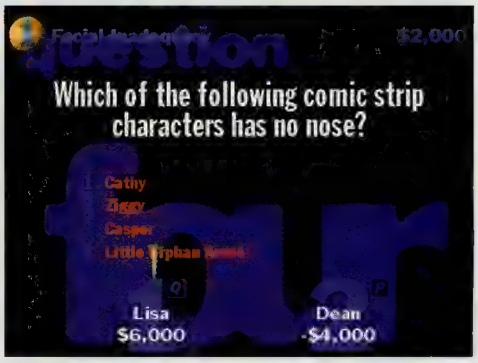
The questions are clearly geared for players in the 25-35 age group; they focus on 1970s and 1980s TV shows and movies, farm animals, grammar basics, and anything else that you can think of. It's an eclectic, yet delightful, mix of topics. There are also Gibberish Questions, in which you are given a mixed-up phrase to sort out. Answering questions correctly earns you money, and the player with the most money wins.

The game uses crisp, clear, text-based graphics throughout, and there are no silly video clips or lengthy animations to get in the way. This simple production is given a lot of personality by the game's host, whose voice-overs sound a lot like comedian David Spade with a dash of Richard Dawson mixed in.

Playing *Jack* by yourself is fun, but it's a real blast with a group. The keyboard-buzzer configuration makes it easy for three people to play at the same computer, and the manual comes with simple instructions for playing tournament-style with larger groups.

The only complaint about *You Don't Know Jack* is the obvious one: If you don't like trivia — even clever and fun trivia — you won't like this game. But if trivia's your thing, you'll find a lot to like here.

— Lisa M. Howie



If you don't know the answer, and you're sure that the other player doesn't know either, you can Screw Your Neighbor by forcing him or her to answer the question.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

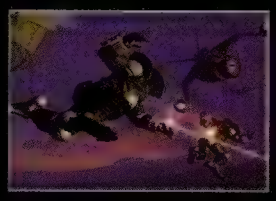
HIGHS: Clever trivia questions;, clean, thoughtful design; hilarious categories.

84%

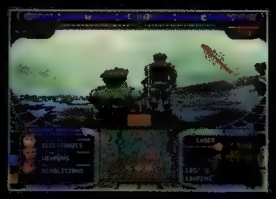
LOWS: There's not much replay value.

BOTTOM LINE: Trivia buffs will really dig it, and will find themselves coming back to it again and again.

You've Assembled The Team









A New Hope...

Product Information Number 129

Shivers

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Sierra On-Line

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; Supported sound card; Mouse	Pentium; Windows 95; 16MB RAM

Shivers' supernatural story, brain-teasing puzzles and riveting graphics will finally give _Myst_ fans something new to talk about.

After spending just a few moments with Sierra's *Shivers*, you'll realize that comparisons between it and earlier titles like *Myst* and *The 7th Guest* are inevitable. But fortunately for Sierra — and for puzzle fans — most of those comparisons will be quite favorable.

The similarities are obvious; in *Shivers*, you use a single cursor (a la *Myst*) to explore its huge game world, and throughout much of the game you'll solve puzzles that are basically variations on classic logic exercises. Success with these can result in several things: a passageway might be opened, or you might learn an important clue to the solution of another puzzle.

But where *Shivers* stands out is in establishing its own mood and story. Set in Dr. Windlenot's Museum of the Strange and Unusual, the game challenges you to make sense of a collection of historic and occult artifacts, natural oddities, manmade devices, and plenty of objects considered by respected researchers to be just plain hokum.



The Ixupi's sudden entrances may startle, but their less-than-frightening images leave a lot to be desired if you're in search of a truly horrific experience.

Most of the scientific community scoffed at Windlenot's theories, but in truth one of his finds is the real McCoy — a set of centuries-old earthen pots once used to imprison Ixupi, evil entities that, when released, drain the life force from any passerby. But that's not all: Apparently a couple of teens wandered into the museum 15 years earlier, never to be seen again. Are they long dead, or have they somehow survived, intent on keeping their presence a secret for some unknown reason?

The Ixupi were somehow freed from their containers while Windlenot was away on an expedition, and early on you learn that he was one of their first victims. His ghost informs you that the only way to protect yourself against the Ixupi is to find the two matching parts of each container (you'll have to assemble ten containers in all), then use it to imprison the Ixupi it once held. Stumble across an Ixupi when you're not carrying its container, and you lose a portion of your life force.

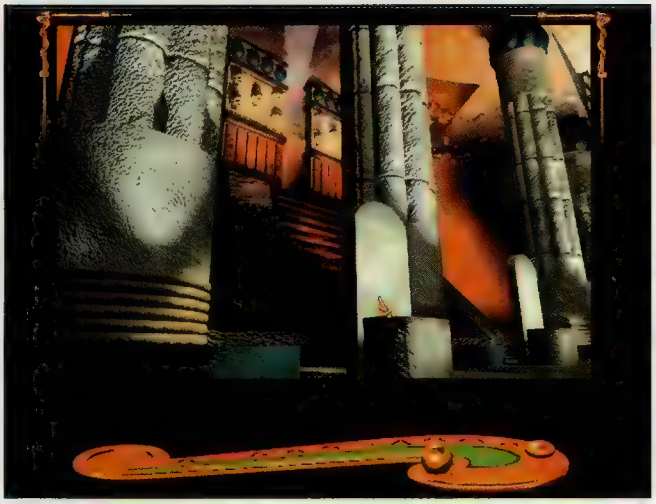
The single cursor and lack of inventory are intended to simplify play, but gamers may tire of clicking on every object in sight to ensure they didn't miss something important. And all the running back and forth can grow wearisome, too. Fortunately, a book in the library explains where the Ixupi are likely to be hiding — ashes, water, tar, fabric, etc. — but on the other hand, there are several habitable homes in the museum for each one of the evil critters. Discover an Ixupi in one location, for instance, and he may have switched to another by the time you return to capture him.

The puzzles are challenging (though sometimes that's only because the ground rules aren't immediately clear), the graphics and musical score are top-drawer, and the plot is well-conceived and executed. But there are a couple of aspects of the game sure to turn off some players. Unless you have a screen capture utility and a printer, you'll need pencil and paper handy to draw hieroglyphs, make notes for puzzles, and record locations. (There's a Flashback feature that lets you review things you've seen, but it can't be viewed simultaneously with the puzzle.)

My other problem with *Shivers* is that, in the end, it's just not scary. Sure, the museum is full creepy critters and horrifying devices, but any atmosphere of terror they create vanishes when you face the cartoon-like Ixupi — they're closer to Casper than to the essence of evil, and distinguish themselves as the game's weakest graphics element.

But for fans of puzzle adventures, these are minor flaws, easily shrugged off once the brain-teasing problems and absorbing story line get their hooks in you. And with a game this classy and inviting, that shouldn't take too long.

— Steve Poole



Photorealistic graphics like these will have you ooh-ing and ahh-ing as you work your way through *Shivers'* massive game world.

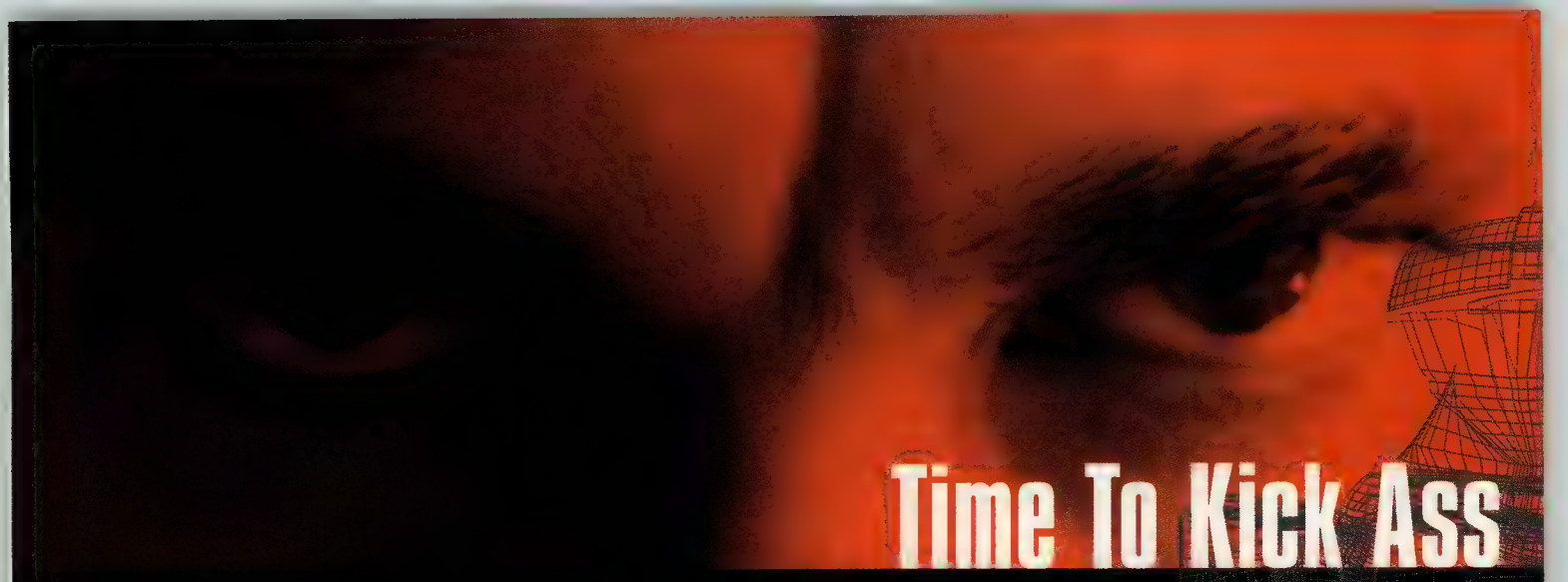
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

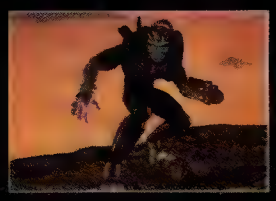
HIGHS: Stunning graphics; good sound; well-conceived plot; a good variety of puzzles.

LOWS: Doesn't deliver any real horror; lots of backtracking; not much character interaction.

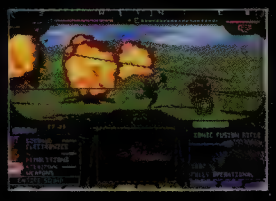
BOTTOM LINE: Puzzle fans who enjoyed *Myst* have a new one to add to their collection.



Time To Kick Ass



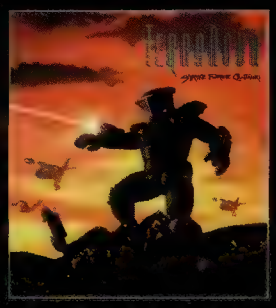






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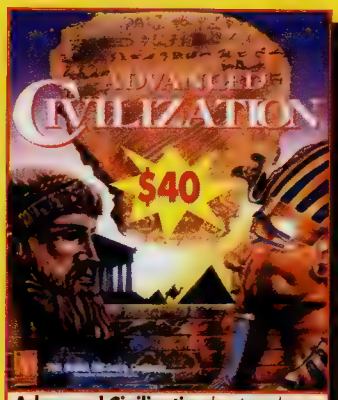
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38127 5th Fleet . . . 38
39478 A 10 2: Silent Thunder WIN95 . . . 45
40359 AH 64D Longbow . . . 47
38907 Aces Collection . . . 45
41357 Activision's C64: 15 Pack WIN95 . . . 26
41536 Al Unser Jr Arcde Racing CD WIN95 . . . 38
40926 Aliens . . . 48
41335 Allied General WIN95 . . . 42
39212 Alone in the Dark III . . . 42
40122 Anvil of Dawn . . . 33
39144 Apache . . . 44
40897 Ascendancy . . . 42
41340 Atari 2600 Action Pak 3 WIN95 . . . 26
40948 Bad Day on the Midway . . . 44
41981 Basketball: Complete NBA 96 . . . 29
41628 BattleGround: Gettysburg 2.0 . . . 38
40225 Big Red Racing WIN95 . . . 33
41496 Bioforge Gold . . . 43
42013 Black Knight:Marine Strike . . . 44
39019 Brett Hull Hockey '95 . . . 34
39011 Brutal . . . 37
40467 Caesar II . . . 45
40981 Chessmaster 5000 . . . 38
38011 CivNet . . . 46
41515 Civilization 2 . . . 40
36016 Colonization . . . 40
41943 Commanche 2.0 . . . 32
34696 Command and Conquer . . . 49
34741 Crusader: No Remorse . . . 47
38874 CyberMage: Darklight Awakening . . . 43
40650 Cyberia 2 . . . 47
41339 Dagger's Rage WIN95 . . . 28
40129 Daggerfall: Arena Elder Scrolls 2 . . . 48
36302 Dark Forces . . . 47
41009 Dark Seed II . . . 45
40470 Dawn Patrol 2: Flying Corps . . . 26
41337 Deathkeep WIN95 . . . 43
41406 Descent II . . . 44
40463 Destruction Derby . . . 36
36746 Discworld . . . 35
36320 Doom II: Hell on Earth . . . 46
40457 Druid . . . 38
41486 Dungeon Keeper . . . 47
41338 Dust: Wired West WIN95 . . . 40
40117 ESPN NBA Airborne . . . 36
41236 Elk Moon Murders WIN95 . . . 26
40429 Empire II . . . 33
41336 Entomorph WIN95 . . . 38
40468 F 16 Fighting Falcon . . . 45
40336 FIFA International Soccer 96 . . . 40
38987 FX Fighter . . . 44
40335 Fade to Black . . . 47
36699 Flight Shop . . . 37
36979 Flight Simulator 5.1 . . . 53
36629 Flight Unlimited . . . 40

CD ENTERTAINMENT

41508 Flying Nightmares 2 . . . 40
40416 Fury WIN95 . . . 37
39461 Gabriel Knight II . . . 49
40776 Gadget WIN95 . . . 44
38540 Girlfriend Teri w/ Speech . . . 32
37917 Go Digital Volume I . . . 14
40146 Golf 2.0 WIN95 . . . 36
21557 Harpoon II . . . 45
33905 Harvester . . . 46
37695 Hexen . . . 52
40121 Hive WIN95 . . . 39
41092 I Have No Mouth & I Must Scream . . . 45
40898 In the First Degree . . . 47
40663 IndyCar Racing II . . . 45
36388 Jagged Allian . . . 3
40703 Jigsaw Power
40337 John Madden
39568 Journeyman P
41736 King's Quest
35328
37754
41697 Loc
33736 Lost
40338 M
3792
3
34155 Mech War
40427 Millenia:
40670 Monop
40425 Mortal
33204 Myst MPC
35818 NASCAR Racing
40705 NBA Live '96 . . . 40
40478 NCAA: Road to the Final Four 2 . . . 36
36388 Jagged Alliance . . . 34
40703 Jigsaw Power . . . 26
40337 John Madden NFL '96 . . . 40
39568 Journeyman Project II . . . 51
41736 King's Quest VII 2.0 . . . 26
35328 Leisure Suit Larry Anthology . . . 45
37754 Links 386 Pro . . . 30
41697 Locus WIN95 . . . 48
33736 Lost Admiral II . . . 38
40338 Magic Carpet II . . . 43
37926 Magic: The Gathering . . . 40
39940 Marine Fighters . . . 25
37567 Master of Magic . . . 40
40234 Master of Orion 2 . . . 40
34155 Mech Warrior 2 . . . 45
40427 Millenia: Altered Destinies . . . 39
40670 Monopoly . . . 40
40425 Mortal Kombat III . . . 46
33204 Myst MPC . . . 49
40705 NBA Live '96 . . . 40
40478 NCAA: Road to the Final Four 2 . . . 36
39725 NFL Quarterback Club . . . 42

CD ENTERTAINMENT

40340 NHL Hockey '96 . . . 43
40339 Need for Speed . . . 47
39098 New Horizons . . . 34
41487 Nocropolis . . . 15
36364 Operation Body Count . . . 30
38593 Operation Crusader . . . 39
42193 Over the Reich . . . 44
42314 PGA Tour '96: Spanish Bay . . . 23
40087 Panic in the Park . . . 34
36481 Panzer General . . . 43
39800 Paparazzi . . . 14
31956 Pax Imperia 2 WIN95 . . . 45
41963 Penthouse Interactive V . . . 44
41184 Perfect Partner Bridge . . . 25
41183 Perfect Player Poker WIN95 . . . 25
34085 Phantasm
254 Pinb
nture WIN95 . . . 41
T IBM CD . . . 45
41183 Perfect
34085 Phantasmagoria . . . 53
36773 PitFall, Mayan Adventure WIN95 . . . 41
39467 Police Quest V: SWAT IBM CD . . . 45
42342 Power Dolls . . . 29
41209 Pressure Drop WIN95 . . . 26
39728 Primal Rage . . . 46
40574 Prisoner of Ice . . . 42
38299 Pro League Football 75th Anniv . . . 38
39298 Re Elect JFK . . . 31
41408 Realm of the Haunted . . . 44
40458 Realms of Arkania: Shadows . . . 33
41226 Rebel Assault II . . . 47
31705 Return to Zork . . . 26
39569 Riddle of Master Lu . . . 52
39970 Rugby World Cup 95 . . . 40
41726 SIZone . . . 25
40645 Screamer . . . 39
40726 Shanghai Great Moments WIN95 . . . 26
39507 Shivers . . . 34
40329 Shock Wave WIN95 . . . 43
40167 Silent Hunter . . . 46
40775 SimCity 2000 Collection WIN95 . . . 56
41859 SimClassic Collection II WIN95 . . . 30

CD ENTERTAINMENT

38732 Skullcracker . . . 39
37025 Sorority House . . . 27
35225 Space Ace . . . 38
39449 Space Quest VI . . . 42
41073 Spycraft: The Great Game WIN95 . . . 45
38129 Stalingrad . . . 40
38200 Star Control Collection . . . 21
40469 Star Rangers . . . 45
40220 Star Trek: Generations WIN95 . . . 40
39732 Star Trek: Omnipedia . . . 46
34278 Star Trek: Star Fleet Academy . . . 44
34568 Star Trek: TNG "A Final Unity" . . . 46
34350 Star Trek: TNG Tech Manual . . . 41
40876 Steel Panther . . . 43
36893 Stonekeep . . . 49
41942 System Shock Classic . . . 15
40430 TFX 2000 . . . 45
33743 TFX: Tactical Fighter . . . 20
39735 TekWar . . . 45
40718 Terminal Velocity . . . 35
41461 Terminator:Future Shock . . . 43
40649 Terra Nova: Centauri . . . 39
32154 The Dig . . . 45
39460 Thexder 2 WIN95 . . . 38
38595 Third Reich . . . 33
40235 This Means War . . . 25
39783 Thunderscape . . . 48
38656 Top Gun . . . 42
39473 Torin's Passage . . . 45
36697 Tower Controller . . . 44
37565 Transport Tycoon . . . 25
40639 Tri Tryst WIN95 . . . 25
39487 Trophy Bass . . . 45
41451 U.S. Navy Fighter Gold . . . 47
37538 U.S.S. Ticonderoga . . . 25
40347 Ultima VII:Complete Classic . . . 15
41281 Ultimate Doom WIN95 . . . 38
40236 Ultimate Football '95 . . . 25
41285 Under Pressure WIN95 . . . 26
32937 Under a Killing Moon . . . 44
42022 V For Victory: Commemorative . . . 27
40232 Virtual Karts! . . . 40
41304 Warcraft 2: Tide of Darkness . . . 46
40882 Wargame Contruction Set Rifles . . . 38
41305 Warhammer 40000: Dark Crusader . . . 43
34284 Werewolf Vs. Comanche . . . 47
32927 Wetlands . . . 29
35405 Wings of Glory 1917 1918 . . . 25
41488 Wolfpack . . . 15
38914 Woodruff & Schnibble . . . 33
40221 World Circuit 2 . . . 40
40222 World Circuit Manager . . . 40
39447 World Hockey '95 . . . 28
34292 X COM: UFO Defense . . . 25
41323 You Don't Know Jack . . . 30
41583 Zeddas: Servant of Sheol . . . 37
37752 Zeppelin . . . 15
40901 Zoop . . . 26

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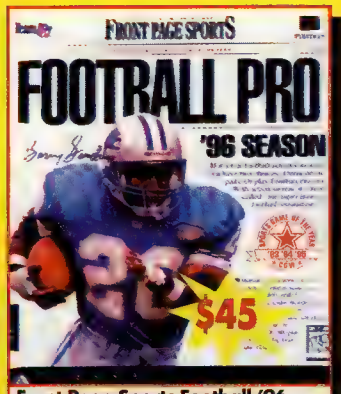
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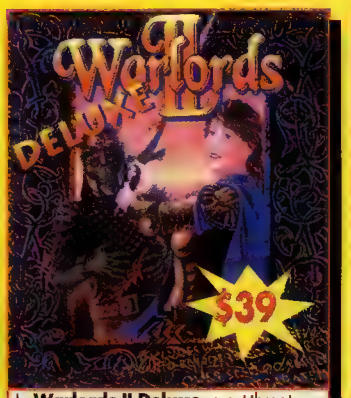
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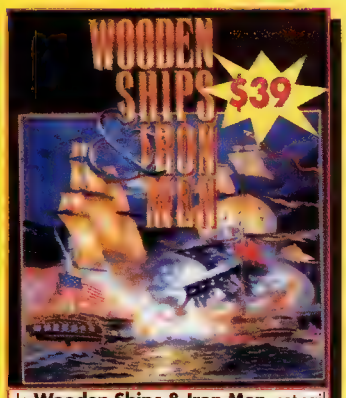
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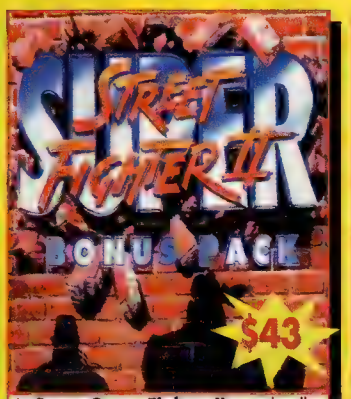
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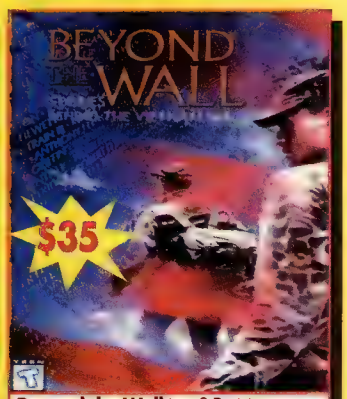
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40701 CH Pedals 41
40804 CH Throttle 59
40263 CyberMaxx 180 VR Headgear 889
39877 F 15 Eagle Tactical Stick 112
39874 F 15 Hawk Tactical Stick 35
39875 F 15 Raptor Tactical Stick 46
39876 F 15 Talon Tactical Stick 67
40715 F 16 Combat Stick 58
40802 F 16 Fighter Stick 73
40801 F 16 Flight Stick 35
31417 Flight Stick Pro IBM 46
27914 Flight Stick Pro MAC 66
38124 GameGun 44
33855 Gameport 2000 Up to 80MHz 17
39627 Gravis Firebird PC Controller 58
35133 Gravis Phoenix Control System 82
41652 Gravis Thunderbird Joystick 41
35458 PC Golf System 121
36876 Pro Pedals 71
29441 SFX GamePad 25
40601 Sidewinder 29
40602 Sidewinder 3D PRO 56
41750 Spaceball Avenger 103
30825 Thrustmaster ACM Game Card 27
35104 Thrustmaster F 16 FLCS 112
38027 Thrustmaster FCS MKII IBM 63
41348 Thrustmaster Formula T2 IBM 99
29522 Thrustmaster Pro FCS 104
29863 Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals IBM 104
33804 Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals MAC 101
38156 Thrustmaster TQS for FLCS 112
33780 Thrustmaster WCS MarkI MAC 63
31258 Thrustmaster WCS MarkII IBM 93
38462 Virtual Pilot Pro 66
36656 Wingman Extreme Joystick 42

SOUND CARDS

39030 Gravis UltraSound Ace 82
41653 Gravis Ultrasound PNP 120
34807 Sound Blaster 16 Value Edition 93
34660 Sound Blaster Value Edition 35
35480 Sound Canvas DB SCD 10 GM Ver CALL
35628 Sound Canvas DB SCD 15 GS Ver CALL
41701 Sound Canvas PCMCIA w/Software 303
41957 Sound Canvas SC 55ST CALL
38635 Sound Canvas SC 88 804
30931 WaveBlaster II Game Pack 120

SPEAKERS

36500 Jazz J 590 Speakers 78
38258 Koss HD 20 Speakers 16

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36173 Koss HD 50 Speakers 33
38255 Koss HD 100 Speakers 64
38308 Vivid3D 46
37712 Vivid3D Plus 60
38455 Vivid3D Pro 107
40403 Vivid3D Pro EX 80
41504 Vivid3D Speakers 145
40402 Vivid3D Studio 107
41505 Vivid3D Theater 183
33649 Yamaha Powered Speaker (Pair) 47
37714 Yamaha Powered Subwoofer 137
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35855 4PLEX Quad speed INT w/ctrl 395
41911 6PLEX 6X EXT w/ctrl IBM 545
41912 6PLEX 6X EXT w/ctrl MAC 522
39574 6PLEX 6X INT w/cntl 463
39574 6PLEX Sixspeed INT w/ctrl 463
41644 Diamond 4400 4X CD Kit 291
41643 Diamond 7000 4X CD Kit 376
41632 Diamond 8000 8X CD Kit 575
40382 Digital Schoolhouse 4X INT 320
39271 Discovery CD16 4X INT CDROM 314
34923 MultiSpin 4XE EXT CDROM 503
38064 MultiSpin 4XE EXT CDROM Kit 580
38058 MultiSpin 4XI INT CDROM 402
38065 MultiSpin 4XI INT CDROM Kit 479
39975 MultiSpin 6XI INT CDROM 485
39565 Multimedia Home 4X 407
41397 Sound Blaster 6X INT PNP 277
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39902 9FX Motion 771 2MB VRAM VLB 294
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39895 9FX Vision 330 2MB DRAM PCI 178
39896 9FX Vision 330 2MB DRAM VLB 178
39900 9FX Vision 531 2MB DRAM VLB 222
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38353 Diamond Speedstar 64 2MB ISA 206
38132 Diamond Stealth64 DRAM 2MB PCI 206
38133 Diamond Stealth64 DRAM 2MB VLB 206

VIDEO CARDS

39427 Diamond Stealth64 Video 2MB PCI 343
39428 Diamond Stealth64 Video 2MB VLB 343
37182 Graphics Xpression 2MB ISA 189
38319 Graphics Xpression 2MB VLB 189
39905 Imagine 128 1280 4MB PCI 624
39906 Imagine 128 1600 4MB PCI 854
39907 Imagine 128 Pro 8MB PCI 1336

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38277 Cardinal MVP144IF 14.4INT F/M 50
40791 Cardinal MVP144IV2 F/M w/VMail 80
40790 Cardinal MVP144XV2 F/M w/VMail 89
38278 Cardinal MVP288I 28.8INT F/M 139
40789 Cardinal MVP288IV F/M w/ VMail 164
38280 Cardinal MVP288XF 28.8EXT F/M 160
40788 Cardinal MVP288XV F/M w/ VMail 183
41480 SupraExpress 28.8 EXT F/M PNP 165

MODEMS/FAXES

40622 SupraExpress 28.8 INT F/M PNP 147
39269 TDK DF1414 PCMCIA 14.4 F/M 137
39267 TDK DF2814 PCMCIA 28.8 F/M 233

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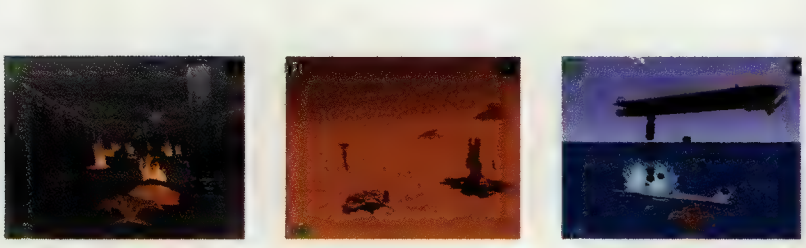
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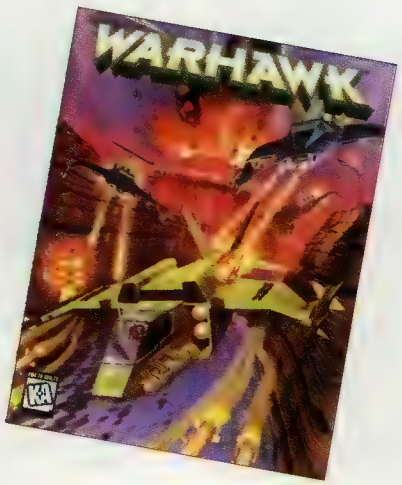
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Product Information Number 158

Druid: Daemons of the Mind

Category: Adventure/RPG

Developer: Synthetic Dimensions

Publisher: Sir-tech, P.O. Box 245
Ogdensburg, NY 13669
(800) 447-1230

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; 12MB hard- drive space; Mouse; SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

Sir-tech brings their roleplaying experience to the adventure game genre, and it's a fun — but somewhat muddled — experience.

Sir-tech doesn't have to worry about their reputation as publisher of some of the best roleplaying games around. Between the *Wizardry* titles and the *Realms of Arkania* games, they've given the genre some of its best moments. So when they steer RPG design into a new area, it's with the confidence of someone who has nothing to prove.

Druid: Daemons of the Mind, developed by Synthetic Dimensions, doesn't even try to pass itself off as a conventional RPG; even the banner on the back of the box proclaims "action adventure." But there are too many standard roleplaying elements — magic wielding, combat, hit points and magic points, quests — for this to be considered a traditional adventure game. While it resembles Origins' *Ultima VIII* a bit, it's certainly a better try at creating a user-friendly and simplified RPG.

Druid's story revolves around four powerful Druid brothers: Lawson, Curak, Havnar, and Astor. Each brother worships a particular element and controls his own island inside the world of Navan. One of the powers of the druid is the ability to instantly travel to any place once it's been seen, but the brothers never visit each other's realms, instead meeting on common ground to discuss subjects of importance to Navan.

This means that when Lawson mysteriously disappears, they are unable to search the other islands for him. So they send you, the grandson of a druid, on a quest across the realms to uncover their lost brother. This is just the beginning of an intriguing story, which unfolds as your character speaks to dozens of NPCs, fights monsters, solves puzzles, and gains new insight into the mysterious world of his ancestors.

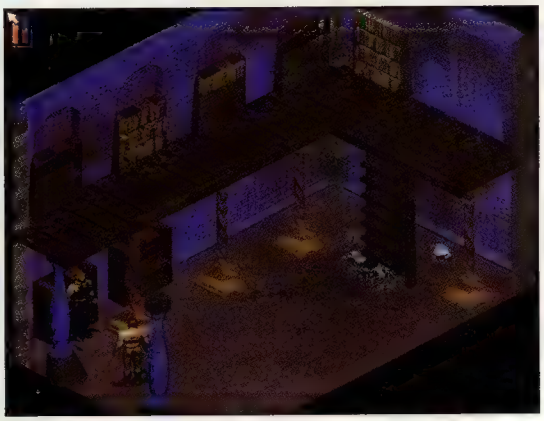
The point of *Druid* was to create an instantly accessible roleplaying experience for the uninitiated. The skewed top-down perspective is rendered using some of the best graphics seen in any RPG to date, and the interface is stripped down and simple. Your character moves wherever you click the mouse, and exit arrows lead to other screens. Combat is executed by clicking on the target, and a high bash or low-cutting attack is available.

Unfortunately, the controls do have their drawbacks. Your character will often spin wildly as you move your mouse around the screen, and I also found it hard to click on objects when the character is standing too close. The point-and-click combat *can* get tedious, too. These problems are a nuisance, but not fatal.

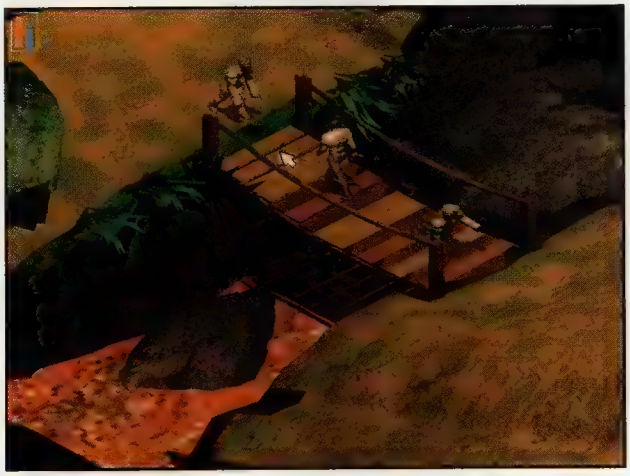
Magic is executed with an interface based on icons for earth, fire, air, and water. Combine any three — for example, air, fire, and earth for fireballs — and click on the target to launch the spell. Both magic points and hit points are depicted with colored bars, and there's also a full object inventory.

It's all very simple — which will be anathema to most hard-core role-players, who want to know their stats and their skills at every moment. But they're not the target audience for this game. *Druid* plays like an adventure game, with characters to talk to and objects to manipulate, and this makes it much more accessible. There's still plenty of depth, though; the story and world consistently fascinate, and the puzzles (while often easy) are logical and interesting. And above all, *Druid: Daemons of the Mind* is a lot of fun.

—*T. Liam McDonald*



You'll find a number of NPCs to talk to in *Druid*'s strange lands; just be careful what you say.



After dispatching one monster, your character crosses a bridge to do battle with another.



There are plenty of good-looking monsters to kill, but combat grows repetitive after a time.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

81%

HIGHS: Inventive story and game content; simple magic system.

LOWS: Fussy interface, repetitive combat sequences.

BOTTOM LINE: An engaging adventure/RPG that purists may hate and newbies and adventure gamers will enjoy.

EF2000

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Ocean's exotic and impressive new sim sets new standards of realism and graphic beauty for the genre.

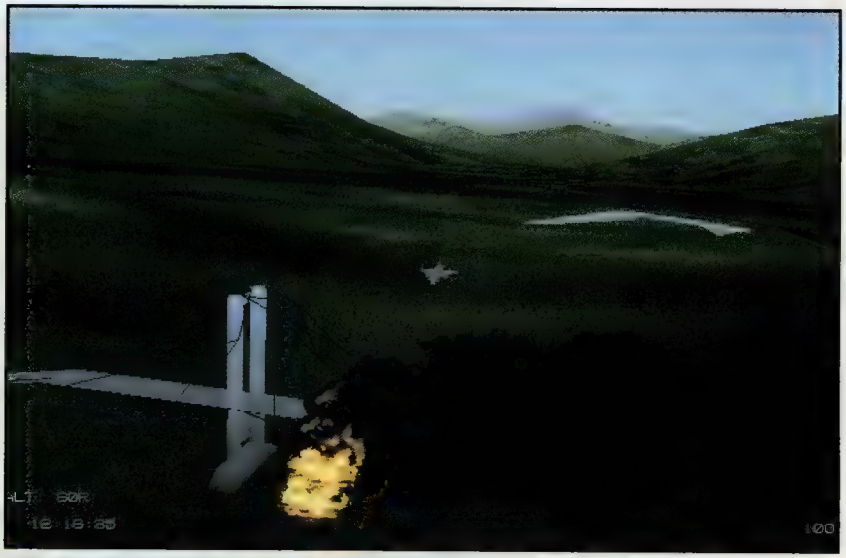
Category:	Flight simulation
Developer:	Digital Image Design
Publisher:	Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St. San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/66; SVGA graphics; 8MB RAM; MS-DOS 5.0 or higher; Mouse	Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; PCI or VESA local bus graphics card; Joystick

If you've ever wondered how far some flight simulation fans will go in pursuit of the ultimate dogfighting experience, just read on: Every now and then, a dedicated group of gamers will check into a hotel somewhere, each carrying a few pieces of luggage and a computer. It's not vacation; it's war. These joystick fighter jocks hook up their machines on a local area network and battle against each other for air simulation supremacy.

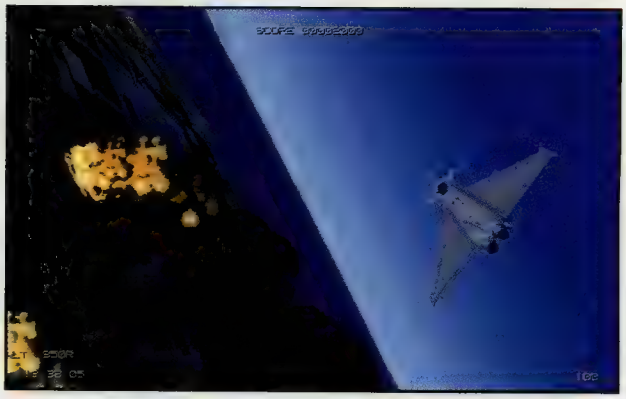
For these flight sim fanatics, as well as many saner sim fans, Spectrum HoloByte's *Falcon 3.0* has been the weapon of choice, delivering a realistic canvas on which to carry out the high art of air combat. But now there's a new top gun in town that's about to change all that. Digital Image Design, the makers of *TFX: Tactical Fighter Experiment*, have created *EF2000*, the heir apparent to *Falcon* as the ace of aces for the hard-core flight-sim crowd.

Along with the excellent *U.S. Navy Fighters*, *EF2000* is one of the most impressive simulations of modern air combat available for the home computer. And with its multi-player capability, *EF2000* pushes the envelope a little farther than *U.S. Navy Fighters* and is sure to satisfy even the most demanding sim fan with its dogfighting capabilities.



The beautiful graphics do a great job of displaying the game's deadly explosions with exquisite detail. This EF2000 has just finished a bombing run on a key Russian bridge.

With the sophisticated Eurofighter 2000 as its basis, *EF2000* has just about everything you could hope for in a high-tech flight sim; realism, playability, and stellar graphics. Those graphics are sure to tease a lot of *Falcon* fans into the fray; the terrain graphics in particular are miles above any I've seen in an air combat sim — or in any game, for that matter. While the texture-mapped terrain does tend to become pixelated at *very* close range, it's otherwise breathtaking, even at low altitudes. I enjoyed taking the Eurofighter up just for joy rides, checking out the fjords along the coast of Norway. The terrain was so convincing, I found myself looking closely at the beach to see if I could see waves splashing ashore.



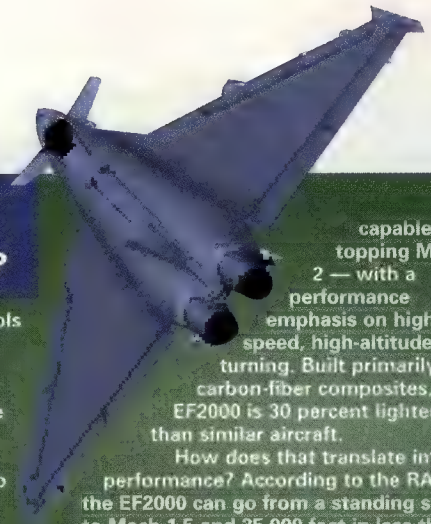
Using the external view, you can get a real taste for the conflict at hand. These massive fires are part of a previous assault on enemy territory.



Even at altitude, the graphics are some of the best you'll see in a flight sim. Just be wary of using this tricky padlock view.

In flight sims, of course, smooth animation is everything, and this is one of the most demanding sims around. You'll need a *lot* of power to get it running smoothly. Don't even think about running *EF2000* on anything less than a Pentium. For acceptable performance, consider a Pentium 90 and 16MB of RAM as required equipment.

But if you have the horsepower, *EF2000*'s graphics yield the visual punch that many sims promise, but fail to deliver. And the you-are-there feeling is carried through to other aspects of the game, as well: Pull too many Gs in a dive



WHAT in the WORLD is an EF2000?

Want to sit at the controls of the hottest fighter aircraft in the world? Meet the European Fighter 2000.

The Eurofighter is a multi-role fighter designed to outfly and outfight any plane in the world, including the expected upgrades to the Russian MiG-29 Fulcrum and the SU-27 Flanker. As retired RAF Group Captain Ned Frith says in the game's manual, "Parity is not good enough."

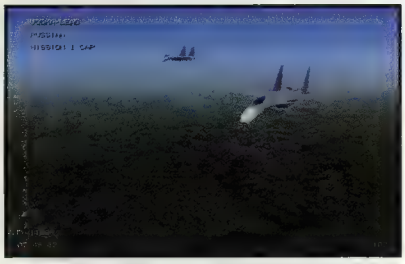
The single-seat, twin-engine EF2000 is a high-supersonic aircraft — capable of topping Mach 2 — with a performance emphasis on high-speed, high-altitude turning. Built primarily of carbon-fiber composites, the EF2000 is 30 percent lighter than similar aircraft.

How does that translate into performance? According to the RAF, the EF2000 can go from a standing start to Mach 1.5 and 35,000 feet in less than two and a half minutes. Powered by two Eurojet turbo-fan engines delivering 40,000 pounds of thrust, the plane can take off under full load in about 300 meters and seven seconds.

The fighter's typical weapon load is ten air-to-air missiles, or a combination of seven air-to-surface and six air-to-air missiles for attack missions. Threat detection consists of an Infrared Search and Track system, along with Pulse Doppler radar. Targeting is simplified with a helmet-mounted sight that, with newer ASRAAM missiles, lets the pilot target any threat he can see.

As a collaboration among the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Spain, the EF2000 program was launched in 1983 in order to produce a plane that could rule the skies for years to come. The first production models of the European Fighter Aircraft are scheduled for deployment in the Royal Air Force in the year 2000.

or a turn, and you'll hear yourself struggling to breathe. Take a missile hit, and you might see your arms flailing about with the impact. Those are nice touches, and *EF2000* is full of them.



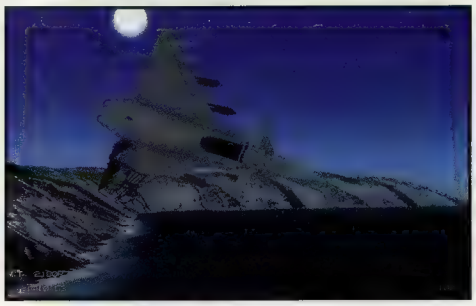
The enemies of *EF2000* come in many shapes and sizes, but most of the opposition you'll run into is composed of Russian-made Mig-29s.

There are a few bugs, of course. You can have up to four wingmen at your command, and they generally behave fairly intelligently. But they still pull some bone-headed tricks sometimes, just as they do in most other air combat sims. And there are a few other rough edges that I hope DID will smooth out, including a tricky padlock view that makes the game nearly unplayable.

While the multi-player crowd drools at the chance to go head-to-head with other pilots, *EF2000* soars pretty high as a stand-alone sim, too. Russia, naturally, is the culprit in the futuristic European crisis. A Russian force is attempting to take control of Norway and Sweden as a foothold to an invasion of northern Europe. The Eurofighter is called upon to perform a variety of missions that take advantage of its versatility, from combat air patrol to ground strikes. Missions are generated each time out to avoid duplication.



The virtual cockpit of *EF2000* lets you check your instruments with ease, even when you're chasing down a bogey.



After taking heavy damage to its starboard wing, the EF2000 starts a deadly plunge to the ground below.

Despite its complexity, *EF2000* is a fairly friendly program for rookies. The autopilot capabilities, as well as the training missions, should get most gamers up and flying pretty quickly. The flight model and characteristics of this advanced fighter also help new pilots get their wings without leaving too many embarrassing craters behind. But, make no mistake, *EF2000* is a simulation, not a game. If you're ready for the hottest combat aircraft in the world, here's your chance.

—Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Cutting-edge graphics; good flight engine; network play

LOWS: Very steep hardware requirements; a few bugs hamper the realism of the game.

BOTTOM LINE: A must-buy for hard-core flight simmers and a great game for novices.

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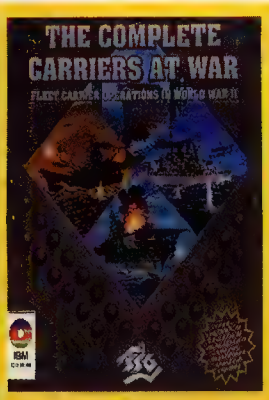
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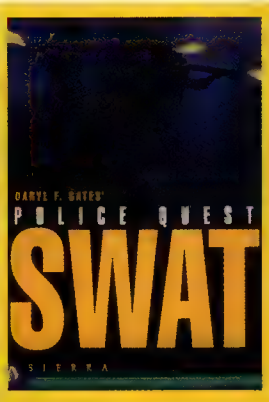
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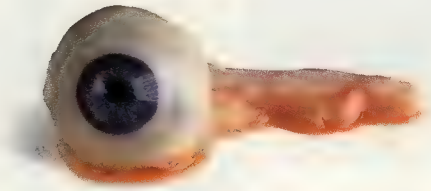
Links Pro 386 CD, Under a Killing Moon CD, Falcon 3.0 3.5, Maxx Cobra Flight Stick, Harpoon Classic CD or Win, Complete UMS, Harpoon 2 3.5, Jutland CD, Universal Neverlock, Casino Gambler Kit 3.5

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Product Information Number 101

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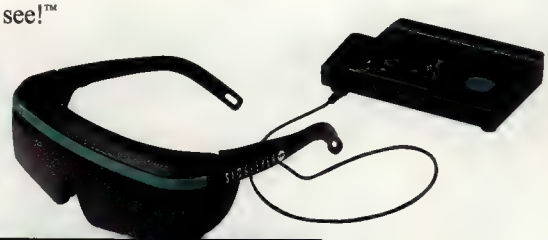
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Product Information Number 166

Lion

Category: Simulation

Developer: Manley & Associates

Publisher: Sanctuary Woods, 1825 S. Grant St., San Mateo, CA, 94402 (415) 286-6000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486DX/33; Windows 3.1; DOS 5.0+; 4MB RAM (in DOS mode) 8MB RAM (in Windows mode); 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	486DX/66; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Finally, a sim that lets you sleep all day while the wife does the hunting — it's good to be King of the Beasts.

With the release of their award-winning sim, *Wolf*, Sanctuary Woods startled the gaming community by producing a roleplaying simulation that detailed the everyday life of wolves in the wild. By challenging the player's skill in hunting, killing, mating, and survival, *Wolf* proved to be more than just a clever new concept; it also delivered some much-needed insight to the dilemmas of these misunderstood predators. This fresh approach to "edutainment" painlessly enlightened us, while entertaining as few games have done before.

Now Sanctuary Woods is back with the second in the Predator Series, this time detailing the trials and tribulations of the King of the Beasts — the lion.

Since I raise wolves, I'm constantly being asked what it's like to be near these predators. I say, "Imagine having a cat in a really *big* dog's body!"

Now, lions are a whole other story. Imagine having a cat in a *huge cat's* body! It's a rare wolf that exceeds 150 lbs. outside of the arctic regions. Your average lion, though, weighs from 400 to 500 lbs., with teeth and claws that make the wolf's look like niblet corn.

Both lions and wolves are social animals, living and working together in closely-knit family units; wolves in packs, lions in prides. And it is precisely these similarities which make *Lion* the logical, and worthy, successor to *Wolf*.



Shaba and her cubs are hungry. Her sense of smell reveals prey aplenty — but can she make the kill alone?

As in *Wolf*, *Lion* offers you 20 different animals to choose from, in existing prides or handpicked groups you assemble yourself. You may control a single nomad or all members within a pride. Each animal has its own distinct capabilities, weaknesses and success ratios with different prey species; one may excel at bringing down warthogs but fare poorly with zebras.

Unlike the three disparate game worlds in *Wolf*, *Lion* takes place in only one — the savanna grasslands and wooded plains of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, albeit with four distinct seasons. The Serengeti is home to seven other predators besides yourself (including hyenas, leopards, and, of course, man), and competition for the 70-odd prey species is fierce.

Lion offers play in two forms: a series of 20 increasingly difficult, mission-based scenarios, or a free-form simulation of day-to-day life on the Serengeti. Although the game mechanics have been improved, much of the gameplay remains identical to that in *Wolf*. You walk, sleep, play (yes, even lions take a break), and every now and then you kill something and eat it.

Of course, that's not as easy as it sounds. Most of the animals you like to eat are faster than you, and even though a lion has a better chance of making a solo kill than a wolf, their stamina is far less than you'd imagine. And for a nice change of pace, these activities are scored on a point system so family members can compete for high scores with their own saved games.



The Zoom feature acts like a radar map. Check it often to keep track of the constantly moving Serengeti citizens.

To complement the game section, there is The Lion Safari — an interactive guided tour of leonine life on the Serengeti. This tour presents a fascinating look at the life of these big cats; if you're not careful, you may even learn a thing or two about being a better lion.

With gameplay and scenarios similar to its predecessor, *Lion* isn't quite the step beyond *Wolf* you might expect, but it does have its nice little touches that add to the realism of the whole experience. You can use the long grass to creep up on your prey; vultures circle overhead at the kill site; and your eyes glow a fierce amber in the darkness of the savanna night.

Like the blurb on the box says, *Lion* is a game of strategy, skill, instinct, and persistence. It's also a thoughtful and intriguing look at the lives of animals most of us never get to see in their natural habitat. And, besides, it's probably the only chance you'll get to kill and eat a water buffalo with your family.

—Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Another fine and intriguing simulation of predators in the wild.

LOWS: There's still not much to do between meals.

BOTTOM LINE: As *Doom II* was to *Doom*, *Lion* is to *Wolf*. It's more of the same, but well worth playing.

Total Distortion

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Pop Rocket

Publisher: Pop Rocket, 1320 7th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122 (415) 731-9112

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486SX/33; DOS 5.0; Windows 3.1; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card; SVGA	486/66; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; Windows 95

With *Total Distortion*, Pop Rocket introduces yet another PC gaming category: the Music Video Adventure Game.

In Pop Rocket's *Total Distortion*, you play an adventurous music video director who's spent his multi-million dollar inheritance on a one-way trip to alternate dimensions in search of fresh material to create the ultimate video. Before you can return to Earth, you must become extremely wealthy, famous, or both.

Despite its obvious (and usually depressing) Macintosh origins, *Total Distortion* makes the most of interactive multimedia with style, substance and gameplay, all displayed with the vibrant verve and insouciant attitude of MTV — without that cable channel's cloying condescension.

After six months of hibernation in a coma tank (interdimensional travel sure is a bitch on the ol' nervous system), you awaken in the bedroom of your own four-story Personal Media Tower. It's here where *Total Distortion* begins to display its quirky sense of style and gameplay.

By scouring a library full of everything from interesting reading material to bizarre arcade games, you begin to uncover enlightening clues about your new home away from home. Even though it's just a small portion of the game, you can entertain yourself here for hours without ever venturing out into the Distortion Dimension (the rockingest destination in the universe).



You control the cameras and special effects as Punk princess Betty Pink performs at the L.A. Stage.

Explore the Media Tower further, and you'll run across the tools you need to get create those ground-breaking videos: The Total Distortion Video Sequencer, DataBrick, VidFone, and VidChip copier. The VidFone is your link to Earth, and you'll use it to shop for supplies (vid clips and new sounds) and conduct your weasely video business with famous producers like Stevie Groovie, Yuji Dude and Hans Kranger.

Of all the items at your disposal, the Video Sequencer is your bread and butter; an impressive console for mixing and editing video clips, sound bites, and original tunes. Some of these you've brought along from Earth; others you can order up through the VidFone, but in order to create truly ingenious videos you'll need to videotape scenes as you explore the Distortion Dimension outside your door.



The Video Sequencer allows you to mix the back-, mid-, and foreground elements of your video, as well as the audio and titles.



The Radio Aquarium offers a variety of programming, accompanied by Elvis the Fish and assorted special effects.

Once you tire of whiling away the hours in your cozy tower, the real adventure begins. With your interdimensional guitar case in hand (which serves as your inventory interface), you start collecting those glorious new sights and sounds — something the Distortion Dimension's ruling Metal Lord considers outright thievery. His guitar warriors will challenge you in battles which are fought (with guitars you've purchased through the VidPhone) by playing the appropriate power chords to counter the warriors'. Fighting bad guys with guitar licks sounds silly, to be sure, but these battles can be great fun if you let yourself accept *Total Distortion*'s bizarre sense of humor.

After you've done all that, you've still only barely scratched the surface. Collecting video clips, creating your own videos, and bargaining for airplay with weasely record producers offers such varied gameplay that you can spend hundreds of hours exploring and experimenting.

With a wide selection of original music that actually sounds good, and seemingly endless possibilities for creative fun, this is what multimedia should strive for. While the rock-and-roll setting is not going to appeal to everyone, *Total Distortion* has enough pure entertainment and variety to satisfy gamers who've been searching for something out of the norm. If you've ever dreamed of becoming a music video director/action hero, or just want a bizarre and inventive adventure, this is the game for you.

—Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Nice graphics, outstanding sound, and an offbeat sense of humor.

LOWS: Some long loading times; bizarre premise and humor won't appeal to everyone.

BOTTOM LINE: *Total Distortion* is an entertaining and unusual rock-and-roll adventure.

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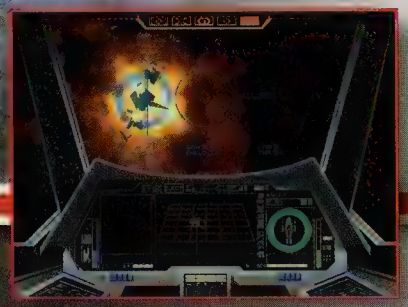
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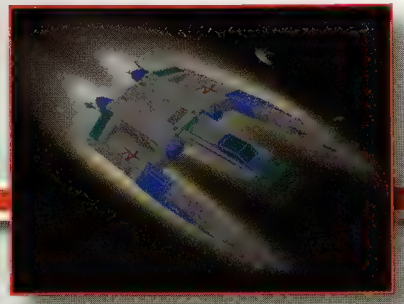
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Product Information Number 163

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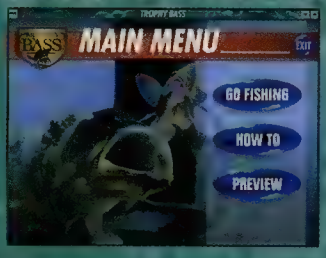
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Product Information Number 150

Road Warrior

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Action

Developer: GameTek

Publisher: GameTek, 2999 Northeast 191st Street, Suite 500, Aventura, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33MHz; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Supported sound cards	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; VLB or PCI video card; Gamepad or steering wheel

No, it's not based on the Mel Gibson film — it's the violent and humorous sequel to *Quarantine*.

No matter what you think of *Road Warrior*, one thing's for sure: it won't score any points with the politically correct set. Anyone and everything that *Road Warrior* producer Rod Humble could think to lampoon gets the treatment here, and though the humor occasionally verges on the tasteless, I get the distinct impression that he doesn't really care if he offends....

Come to think of it, I don't either. Not when it's done in the spirit of fun — and that's exactly what *Road Warrior* is all about. From the moment you get behind the wheel of this futuristic driving game and listen to the crunching heavy-metal riff that opens the game, all the way through to the truly astonishing climax, you'll be laughing out loud as you destroy everything in sight.

The game picks up exactly where *Quarantine* ended, using a series of comic-book cut scenes set to an ominous big-band score to tell the story. Drake Edgewater, a renegade cabby in the 21st-century prison city of Kemo, has just driven his heavily armed hovercab to freedom — only to find that things aren't a helluva lot better on the outside. After crashing his hovercab on the plateau surrounding Kemo City, he's picked up by some unsavory desert denizens who immediately throw him and his car into that night's Killduel.

Win the Killduel and the race that follows it, and you get to the meat of *Road Warrior*, as you head out on dozens of missions aimed at destroying OmniCorp, a mega-company whose agenda ranges from filling balloons at a theme park with the ebola virus to using captured pets in their bargain-basement hot dogs.



This view from the driver's seat is the perspective you'll use most of the time, but there are also external and no-cockpit views available to get a good look at the action.

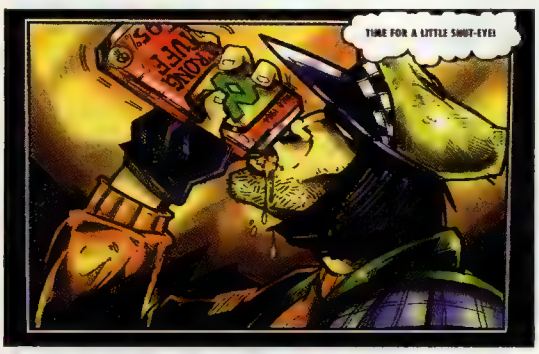
Along the way, you'll receive mission assignments from a wonderfully insane cast of characters whose briefings contain verbal jabs at everyone from game reviewers ("It's so much easier to destroy than to create") to inbred hillbillies ("I know there's a big supply of cow drugs in those silos, 'cause I like to inject myself with it once in a while for kicks"). Like I said before, there's stuff here some people are bound to find offensive, but the stylized comic-book art helps put it all in perspective.



When Daisy Mae here tells you that "the children's bellies have been swolled up larger than a possum in a water tank," you know that Torva Yul's the man responsible.

Depending on the mission you're given, you'll have missiles, flamethrowers, gatling guns, mines, and other goodies at your disposal, and as you race to beat the timer on each mission you'll hear a great variety of background music, from speed-metal riffs reminiscent of Ministry or White Zombie to a toe-tapping bluegrass number that'll have you thirsting for a shot of moonshine.

Both graphics and sound effects are improved over those in *Quarantine*. Players with fast Pentiums will savor the crisp SVGA graphics; the background art is sharp and colorful, and a whole slew of new enemies in the air and on the ground bring variety to the action. The sound effects are just about perfect: Clowns laugh and cry as you run them down at the OmniLand theme park, mutant hillbillies scream "Kick his ass!", and a robotic Torva Yul solemnly intones, "I will crush you, pathetic worm." It is, in a word, righteous.



Stylized comic-book art is used in cut scenes to advance the story — and to remind easily offended players that it is, after all, just a game.

If I had my druthers, there are a couple of things I'd like to see changed in *Road Warrior*. The missions often end just as you're getting pumped up, and I really miss the absence of the "work ethic" of *Quarantine* — picking up fares to earn money for better weapons and armor. It gave the action a little more urgency — and, yes, just a touch of realism.

Realism? Jeez, maybe I've been playing games for too long....

— *Steve Poole*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Superior graphics and sound plus a great story line set this one apart from the crowd.

LOWS: Vehicle control can be awkward; too many missions end too early; inaccurate manual.

BOTTOM LINE: Mile-a-minute action with a snot-nosed attitude — I like it!

Unnecessary Roughness '96

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Sports Accolade

Publisher: Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., San Jose, CA 95129 (800) 245-7744

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Joystick or gamepad; Supported sound card

The football sim playoffs heat up as *UR '96* charges onto the field sporting a new look, revised stats, and bone-crunching action.

Throughout the years, Accolade has produced a modest, if somewhat uninspired, series of football simulations under the Unnecessary Roughness moniker. While those games were attractive enough, with a fair amount of options and stats, the gameplay proved all too unrealistic for most fans. But now things have changed for the better.

Unlike the superficial upgrades of previous Unnecessary Roughness offerings, *UR '96* has gone back to training camp and now looks and plays like a whole new ball game. Improved animation, new features, more plays, and deeper, more realistic statistics take *Unnecessary Roughness '96* from also-ran to Super Bowl contender.

Basically, anything you could ever want in a football sim is here: You buy a team, make the trades, set a league salary cap, and manage rosters and injuries. Then you put on the headphones and call the plays, or step into Troy Aikman's shoes. The enhancements over previous versions are numerous and well conceived, giving you more plays, specific injuries, realistic results, and better animations.

The most welcome improvement in *UR '96* is its reworked statistics. Previous versions were plagued by ridiculously high scores and statistics, such as runners with 4,000-yard seasons. There are still a few bumps — too many interceptions, for example — but the statistics and game results are a vast improvement.



The playbook's the thing, and *UR '96* delivers one of the best in the business.

The play-design feature is also a big surprise, and it's one of the best I've seen in a game of this type. Designing offensive and defensive formations and plays is about as simple as it can be. You can even assign specific audible calls for each play, and your playbook can include 1,300 plays.

While it has certainly come into its own as complete sim package, *UR '96* delivers the most punch with its hard-hitting arcade action. The automatic pass reception feature is an especially nice touch, allowing you to play quarterback and then let your receiver do his job, instead of having to suddenly jump into the receiver's shoes after you release the ball.

There are a few slight concessions to arcade play that hurt the game slightly as a coaching-only sim. Passes seem to float lazily toward the receiver, rather than bulleting through the air. That doesn't look realistic, but it makes it easier to play both quarterback and receiver in arcade mode.

If you're a veteran of computer football sims, you're probably wondering how it stacks up against the latest version of Sierra's Front Page Sports: Football. It's no secret that FPS has been the champion for years, and, in my opinion, still deserves the crown — but only if you're as interested in coaching as I am. *Unnecessary Roughness '96* features better arcade play, so if you want to mix it up on the field (especially in two-player mode), this game's the better choice.

In a past review, I concluded that this sim was, truly, "unnecessary." That was true, then — but the developers have been working hard in the off-season, and that work has paid off with a fine football simulation. If you've ignored *Unnecessary Roughness* in the past, it's time to give this one a look.

—Lee Buchanan



On the field, this year's version of Unnecessary Roughness is a whole new ball game. Improved animations bring new life to the action.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

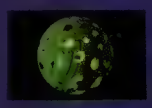
HIGHS: Excellent arcade action and play design; good sound effects and graphics.

84%

LOWS: Steep hardware requirements.

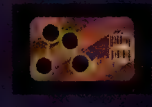
BOTTOM LINE: Definitely a Super Bowl contender, and a nice alternative for action-oriented gamers who want to do more than coach.

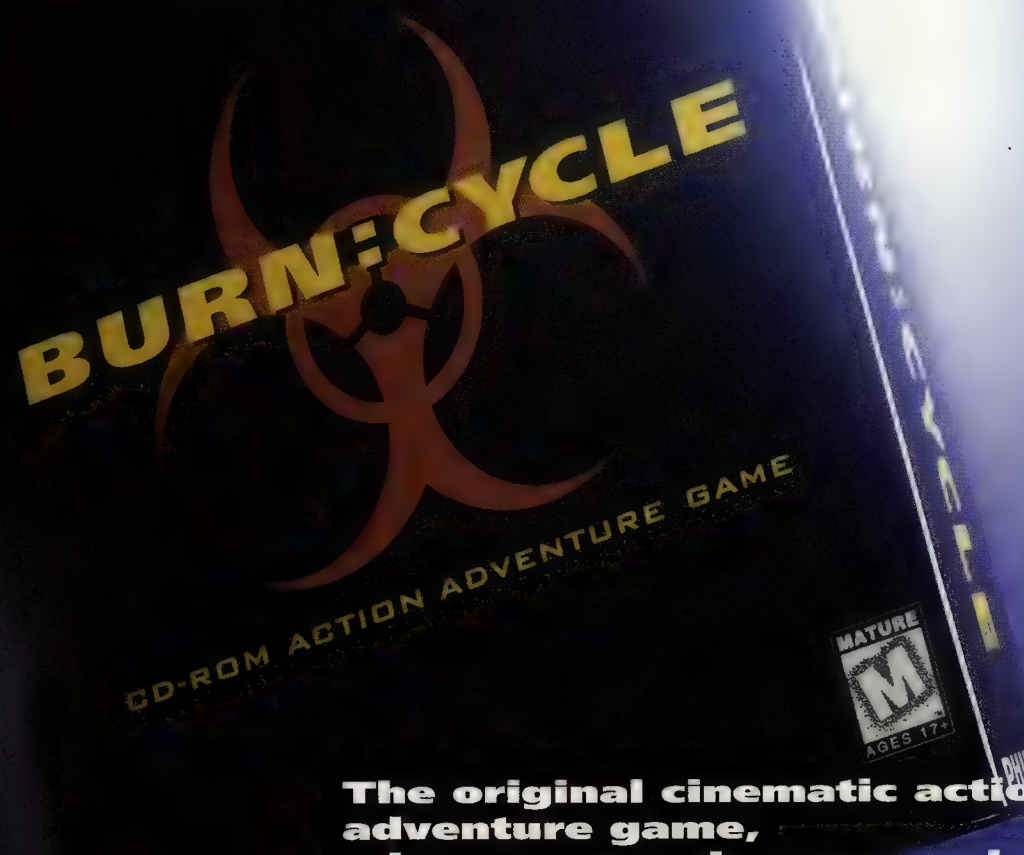
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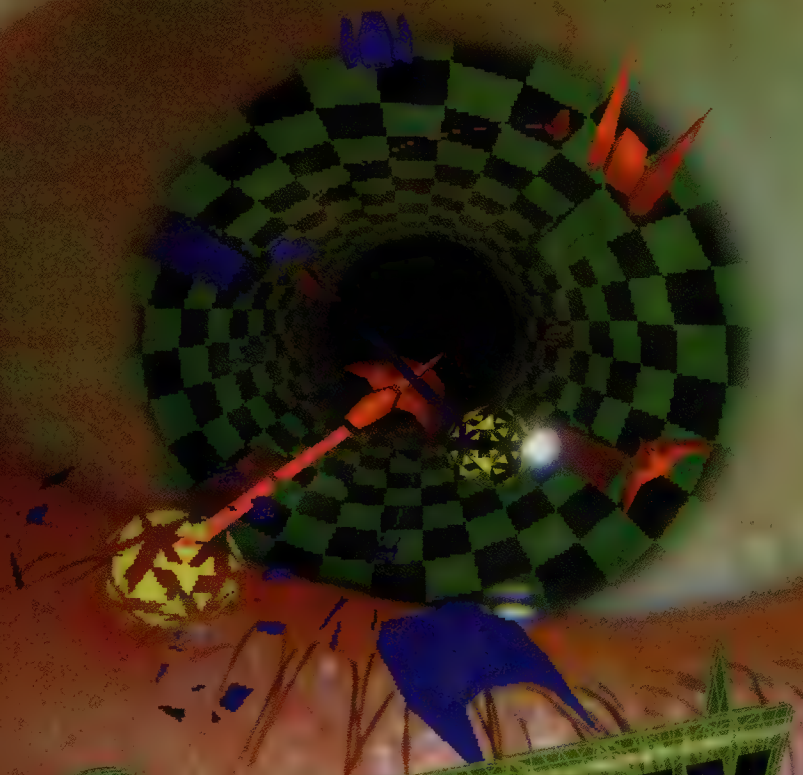
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Product Information Number 117

Ultimate Challenge Golf

Category: Sports

Developer: Friendly Software

Publisher: Grolier Electronic Publishing, 90 Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816 (203) 797-3530

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/DX33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; 15MB hard-drive space; Mouse; Windows 3.1	Pentium; 16MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card

Pro Golfer Greg Norman lends his expertise to this attractive golf simulation, but it's still a bit under par when compared to the competition.

While he may not be as famous as Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer, pro golfer Greg Norman is a true titan of the links, with something like eighty tournament victories under his belt. Now, with Friendly Software's *Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf*, this talented golfer has brought his winning insights and knowledge of this popular game to the PC. *Ultimate Challenge Golf* is based on the Medalist Golf Club in Florida, which Norman helped design. Throughout the game, Norman acts as your host, giving fly-by narrations of each hole, and will even accompany you on a round as a second golfer.

Even without the input of this star duffer, *UCG* would have a lot going for it, starting with its sharp, photo-realistic graphics. In many ways, *UCG* looks better than most of the competition, with good use of shadows and backdrops to accentuate the beauty of this course. This beauty does come at a price, of course; it processes woefully slow on my P60 with 24MB of RAM when you use the game's smaller 15MB install. There's also a 50MB install that can remedy much of this problem — but that's a lot of hard-drive space to sacrifice for a golf game.

Sluggishness aside, *UCG* brings some innovative twists to the golf sim genre that are welcome changes from the norm. There are two modes of play — arcade or sim — that allow you to dial in just the type of game you want. All the info you need is on the game's control bar: lie, wind force and direction, and even the slope of the ground where the aiming pin is set. You can control direction, force, spin, and club height for each shot, and the icon bar even gives you a warning when a shot is particularly risky, like those occasions when you put too much power into your drive.



As your second on the links, pro golfer Greg Norman tees off at the beautiful Medalist Golf Club he helped design.

The difference between arcade and sim mode comes in the swing. In arcade play, you have the traditional three-stage power bar, where you click once to start your swing and click again to set the power. Throughout the game, I found the power bar a little too sensitive and somewhat erratic, although you have the option of slowing it down for better control.

In sim mode, however, manual dexterity is replaced by a single click that makes the golfer swing according to his profile. Each profile can be customized for forty different skills; a golfer can have a good long-range game, but be weak in the wet, or fair in sand traps but bad in the tall grass, and so on. Using these settings, you can create a well-rounded golfer that takes into account aim, force, spin, and club height, as well as that golfer's strengths and weaknesses. Heck, you can even pick from three distinct types of golf balls!



The overhead view is nice, but a few more perspectives would have been even better.

These two distinct styles of gameplay, coupled with the graphics, are *Ultimate Challenge*'s strongest features. But dig a little deeper, and you'll find that it still comes up short against the competition. There are no options for replaying a spectacular shot, no pros or players other than Greg Norman. Despite the attractive graphics, the aiming pin can be hard to locate, and there's no feature that points out where it is. Plus, there's only the one course, and while it's certainly a challenging one, that's far from enough.

While there are some exceptional features that make *Ultimate Challenge* notable, it's disappointing that Friendly Software didn't follow through on its strengths to help it really stand up against *PGA Tour 96* or *Links 386*. In the end, this is a passable golf game for novice duffers, but serious Links fanatics should steer clear.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Unique golfer profiles and great graphics.

LOWS: Not enough features to make it competitive; loooong load times.

BOTTOM LINE: A interesting new take on golf simulations, but one that needs something more to make it work.

FPS: Football Pro '96

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Joystick or gamepad; Supported sound card

You won't find many improvements in the latest addition to the Front Page Sports lineup, but this is still the finest football sim around.

If you're a die-hard follower of Sierra's Front Page Sports: Football series, I have to warn you: this is not a new game. It's not even a major upgrade, and if you already own *Front Page Sports: Football Pro '95*, there's little reason to rush out and buy *'96*.

This one certainly *looks* better, sporting new high-resolution graphics that deliver some of the tastiest SVGA gameplay around, but that's about all that's new for this version. Sure, there are the expected changes from the 1995 edition: new stats, player names, and the addition of expansion teams, the Carolina Panthers and the Jacksonville Jaguars — but little else about gameplay has changed.

Having said that, *Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96* still demands a very high rating. For my money — and yours — it is still the best-looking, most realistic, most detailed football simulation available.

While the enhancements are minor, the Front Page Football dynasty shows no signs of giving up the crown of Super Sim Bowl champ just yet. The strengths that made the original game the best football sim around are still there, starting with its host of options that let you dial in the type of gameplay you want. From action-oriented, hands-on play that lets you take charge of every player on the field, to the outstanding career play, where you call the shots as coach and general manager on draft day and during trading. Other sims have tried to followed suit with similar options, but the FPS series was the first to offer a simulated football career, and it's still the best.



The new moveable camera angles of *Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96* allow you to get the best view of your squad as they lineup to do battle.



The crushing animations of the Front Page Sports: Football series are better than ever with new SVGA capabilities.

While the SVGA graphics of *Football Pro '96* are a welcome improvement, the higher resolution isn't quite as impressive on the football field as it is on objects with more texture, like mountainous terrain in a flight sim, for instance. Still, it's a noticeable step up, and you get to see those pretty new graphics from more camera angles than ever before, including a free-floating perspective.

The player animations are still the best in the business, but thanks to the enhanced graphics, they come at the price of steep hardware requirements to get them running smoothly. Tackling, passing, running, and blocking look more like the real bone-crunching thing than in any other computer football game. You can actually *see* things happen on the field, such as linemen jumping offside, or a holding call on a play when the quarterback seemed to have just a bit too much time to pass.

A word of caution about those graphics: don't bother unless you have a Pentium machine, and 16MB of RAM won't hurt, either. There have been plenty of complaints about choppy graphics and sound from players using Pentiums with 8MB of memory, so take these hardware recommendations seriously.

Unfortunately, the sound effects — one of the more noticeable weaknesses in the series —haven't benefited from any noticeable improvements. It's the same signal-calling, grunting, and lame crowd noises that have plagued every one of these games. Let's hope they don't forget about audio in next year's version.

With its rock-solid gameplay combined with tweaks to the graphics and updated stats, this is easily the sharpest FPS game yet, and if you're already a Front Page owner who's dying to get Jacksonville and Carolina in the league



San Franscisco makes the tackle on Minnesota's receiver as he makes the break for the endzone.

— or if you just have to have those SVGA graphics — you'll be happy with *Football Pro '96*. But if you already own last year's version and expect major improvements, think twice about forking over the bucks for this year's model. Wait for Sierra to come up with a serious upgrade to the FPS series in 1997.

—Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

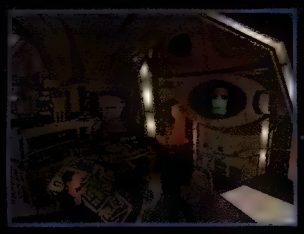
HIGHS: Gorgeous and realistic-looking SVGA graphics; still the best football sim around.

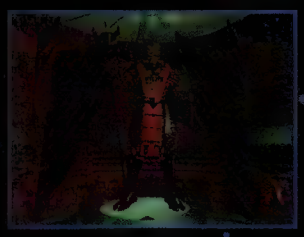
LOWS: Steep hardware requirements; few reasons to upgrade.

BOTTOM LINE: A minor upgrade, but still the champ of football sims.

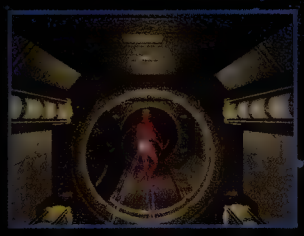
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Product Information Number 173

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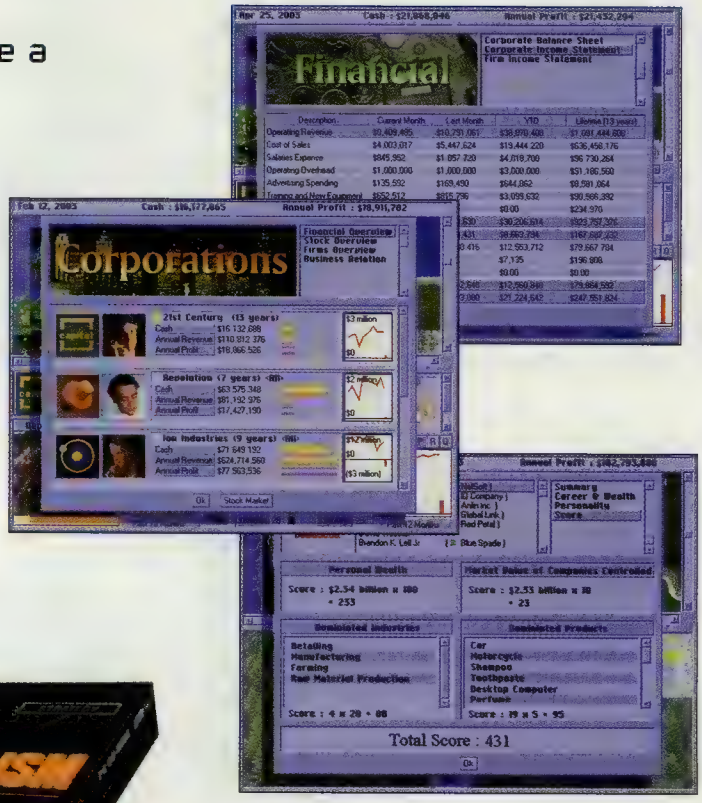
CAPITALISM

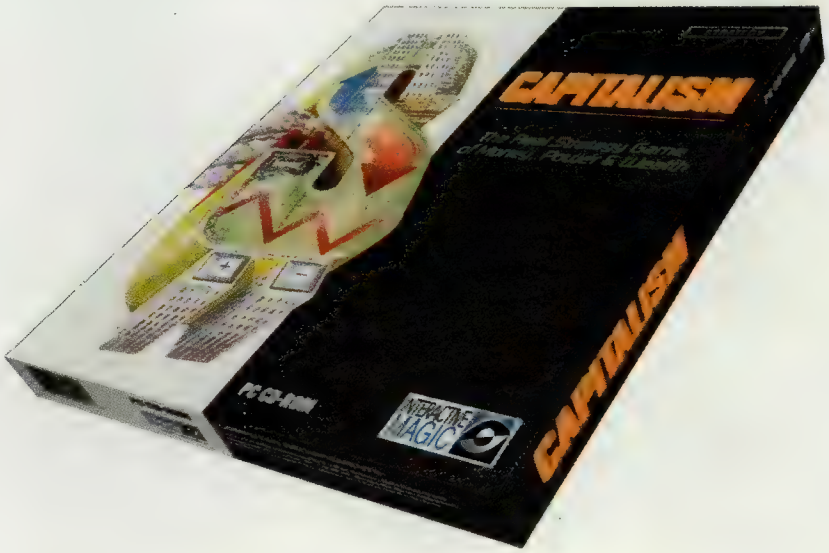
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INTERACTIVE MAGIC

Conqueror, A.D. 1086

Category: Strategy

Developer: Software Sorcery

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486-DX33; 8MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; Sound Blaster or compatible	Pentium; 16MB RAM

The Merrie Olde Englande of *Conqueror* has never looked, or sounded, better — too bad there's not more of a *game* in the pretty box.

Once upon a time, there was an innovative little game company called Cinemaware, whose games boasted the best graphics in the industry. Unfortunately, the company specialized in designing for the Amiga platform and stubbornly clung to that format even as the PC began to dominate the field in the late 1980s, a decision that eventually spelled its doom.

One of Cinemaware's more successful titles was a medieval strategy game called *Defender of the Crown*, in which the player assumed the role of a minor knight in 11th-12th Century England and attempted, through guile and brute force, to claw his way to the kingship.

When *PC Gamer* first ran a scoop on *Conqueror*, we got the impression that this game openly took inspiration from *Defender of the Crown* and reprised it with spectacular graphics, great music, and terrific sound effects. Now, more than a year has passed, and *Conqueror* seemed to have turned into vaporware until, lo and behold, it appeared as a Sierra title.

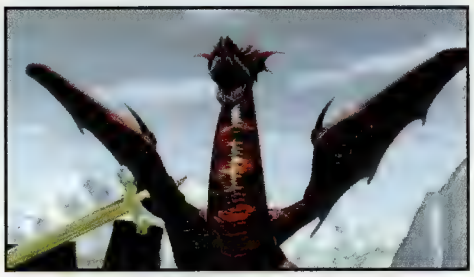
Unfortunately, little if anything seems to have been done to flesh out the gameplay beneath *Conqueror*'s gorgeous graphics. You get the impression of a hastily-licensed product gussied-up in a spectacular package and shoved out the door to turn a fast buck as best it can.

The pity of it is, with some creative redesign and some minor additions to the basic engine, *Conqueror* could have been a classic medieval strategy game, worthy to inherit the mantle of *Defender of the Crown*.

Conqueror starts you off as a young knight in control of a small fiefdom. Once you develop the local economy and raise an army, you have two (not mutually exclusive) basic paths to take: Expand your power and wealth until you're ready to march on London and rip the crown from William the Conqueror's head, or search out and destroy the enormous and elusive dragon that's been scorching the countryside for years.

On the positive side, the game is gorgeous: the scrolling landscapes, dotted with great cathedrals and majestic castles — russet in autumn, blue-white in winter, and lush with that special "wet-green" pastoral beauty of England in the spring — are magically evocative, almost Tolkien-esque.

But beneath that beautiful surface lies a threadbare roleplaying adventure, driven — all too often — by predictable and ultimately annoying arcade sequences.



One way to win the game is by slaying the dragon. It may also be the hardest way, for the beast is very elusive as well as formidable.

One of the chief ways to make extra money is to enter, and win, jousting tournaments. The manual recommends that you spend a lot of time in the "practice mode" before actually entering the lists. It is here that you start to have your doubts.

To put it bluntly, the "practice" jousting mode is an infuriating waste of time. Mouse control is so impossibly mushy that it reminds me of a scene from one of those God-awful action games where you have to be on *exactly* the right pixel at



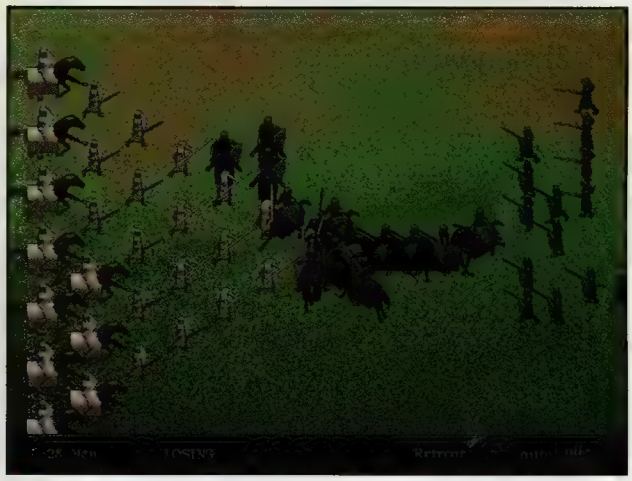
You'll spend a lot of time traveling from tourney to tourney, as well as following King William's orders. Too bad the game doesn't include a road map!



Melee tournaments are good places to pick up combat experience as well as a few shillings. Like the game's other arcade elements, though, they become tiresome rather quickly.



Olde Englande certainly looks beautiful in these scrolling landscapes — but looks aren't everything in a game.



Field battles are fun, though often bloody and marked by dire casualties, even if you're winning the battle.



Ah, the ladies in the jousting stands! One will end up being your wife, although you may have to prove yourself many times before she pays serious attention to your suit.

ADVICE for the Would-Be CONQUEROR

(As delivered over flagons of ale at the Bull's Pizzle Tavern...)

- When you storm a castle defended by mercenaries, try to take out the leader as soon as you can. Since he's the guy who pays the mercs' wages, his sudden demise will dramatically reduce their willingness to fight for him.
- If the King asks you to attack one of his foes by a certain date, be sure to allow extra time for marching your army to the specified location. If your orders state "you must attack Lord Worcestershire by February, 1087," and your expedition doesn't arrive until Feb. 2, you're thenceforth on His Majesty's Shitte Liste — no excuses are allowed.
- When setting a path for cross-country travel, use short increments that follow the main roads. Yea, thou art correct: it *would* be much easier just to click on the destination and assume thy party will take the most logical and efficacious route. Do so, however, and thy party will magically turn into cretins, idiotically following a straight line to the distant goal, even if it means crossing mountains, wading through swamps, or fording rivers when there is a perfectly good bridge a half-mile downstream.

exactly the right nanosecond in order to get through a scene.

Just as an experiment, I tried 50 "practice" jousts in one sitting and won exactly *two* bouts. It's like trying to stick a piece of cooked spaghetti through a ring while galloping full-tilt on a horse.

To make matters worse, the mouse-controlled "lance" handles very differently in a real joust than in the practice mode: instead of being squishy and light, it suddenly becomes impossibly heavy and ponderous. I suppose if you did it a few hundred times, you'd develop a Zen-like instinct for hitting the target, but — trust me — you'll grow heartily sick and tired of the whole nonsensical business long before you reach that level of expertise.

Then there's the matter of castles. To put it bluntly, castle-building is a pain in the ass. Mouse control is so twitchy and unreliable that you'll spend more time "erasing" misplaced towers and wall segments than in actually completing your design.

And despite what the manual implies, there's no real reason to waste time and money on a castle during the game's early stages. Reason: there is *no siege warfare* in the game. To capture an enemy castle, you just burst in through the front door and slaughter the garrison — as if all those mighty walls and towers simply weren't there at all.

These inside-the-castle skirmishes are fun, for a while, since you can collect a lot of valuable loot as you pass from room to room, killing whoever gets in your way. But after a half-dozen or so, they begin to feel as repetitive as the hack-and-slash dungeon crawls in a mediocre fantasy RPG.

And the economic sub-game, in which you develop your fiefs' resources and bring ever-greater numbers of serfs under your control, is a mess. The total space available for village, farm, and forest development is a single fixed screen. And on the big tactical map, there is no connection between any part of your fiefdom and the main road network of the kingdom — yet you're encouraged to build roads. Since they do not connect with any other village or trade routes, one can only wonder what their purpose is.

Logging is a profitable enterprise, but there are no sawmills. And what about deforestation? Crop rotation? Do more serfs settle in your village if you build two tanneries instead of one? Who knows?

Travel is necessary if you want to win purses at the tournaments and court the lady of your choice, but the game makes it pointlessly difficult. The big map shows your home fief and the major cities, but *not the roads*. Nor is there any icon on the big map to show where you and/or your army happens to be at any given moment.

You have to switch back and forth constantly between the landscape map and the big map of England, scrolling around looking for your icon and some point of geographical reference you can aim toward. Granted, there *is* a microscopic icon for your party on a tiny inset map, but, again, no road network is shown. Half the time, you set out for a tournament, only to arrive too late to participate. Yeah, sure, travel was difficult in the Middle Ages, but the frustration involved in simply getting from one place to another is needless and could easily have been corrected by a few simple modifications.

Sierra certainly had the skills to take the outwardly beautiful tapestry of *Conqueror* and flesh it out with the kind of internal consistency that so distinguished *Caesar II*. If they had, *Conqueror* could have been a great game as well as a beautiful one.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Looks great, sounds great, and the field battles are good, bloody fun.

LOWS: Hopeless mouse control in jousting segments, big logic-holes in the economic system, no siege warfare, numerous skimped details that could easily have been corrected.

BOTTOM LINE: A beautiful but half-baked game from a company that should know better.



(figure 1)

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(figure 2)

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Air Power

Category: Air Combat Sim

Developer: Rowan Software

Publisher: Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/66; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

Rowan returns to the skies with *Air Power*, their most inventive and stylish flight sim yet — but this one still has its quirks.



***Air Power*'s missions feature dramatic combat as the skies fill with planes, airships, and flak.**

With the somewhat awkward and entertaining flight sims, *Dawn Patrol* and *Navy Strike*, under their belts, British-based Rowan Software has teamed up with Mindscape to produce *Air Power: Battle in the Skies*, a fantasy air-combat simulation.

The ideas behind their previous games have been good ones, bringing new levels of depth and entertainment to the often unimaginative world of flight sims, and *Air Power* is definitely their best yet. But as anyone who's played *Dawn Patrol* can tell you, there's always a little something about these titles that just doesn't *feel* quite right. Mushy flight models, screwy keyboard layouts and finicky joystick support have been at the heart of the problem, and they're enough to keep Rowan's flight sims from being as successful as they could be.

While *Air Power* still suffers from many of these same problems, it does have one of the best premises I've encountered in a sim. Its alternate-history plot begins with an impressive full-screen video sequence detailing the history of lighter-than-air craft in warfare, pointing out that until the *Hindenburg* crash, Germany had ambitious plans for the use of dirigibles in warfare. *Air Power* runs with this idea and suggests a landlocked country, Karanthia, where four nobles fight for a vacant throne using fleets of airships. These airships are large, floating aircraft carriers, launching fighters and bombers from their bellies and retrieving them on hooks.

The goal of the game is to build support by moving your fleet among different kingdoms, using your diplomat to negotiate where possible, and coordinating air strikes where necessary. You can win by gaining allies, or force your way into the capital, or try and defeat the fleets of the other three dukes. Negotiating for allies and choosing where and when to strike adds a lot to *Air Power*, but the real purpose of this game is flying combat missions.



In order to win the throne, you must travel from region to region, building support and waging war.

The planes are all hypothetical prop-driven planes based loosely on World War Two aircraft, and come equipped with guns, rockets, or free-fall bombs. Although there's a good variety of aircraft, they all handle pretty much the same way, with slight variations in speed and maneuverability. This wouldn't be much of a problem if it weren't for the fact that the controls are over-responsive and the flight dynamics far too forgiving. For the casual gamer, this may feel just fine — but for a sim fanatic, it just doesn't feel comfortable.

That's a shame, because missions like fighter sweeps, ground attacks, and swirling battles around armed blimps are such a delight. The SVGA graphics are simply beautiful and run quite smoothly despite the high resolution. Rowan has also improved on their sound effects, with good gun sounds and wingman chatter. Unfortunately, they left in the bewildering, inexplicable keyboard commands from their previous games, with well over thirty keys for views alone, all of them mystifying and awkward.

Aside from these few points, *Air Power* is a real delight as a general flight sim and distinguishes itself with a good story and strategy angle. Hard-core sim fans will be frustrated by the awkward controls and elaborate keyboard commands, but gamers interested in some genuinely engaging action will find it in *Air Power*.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

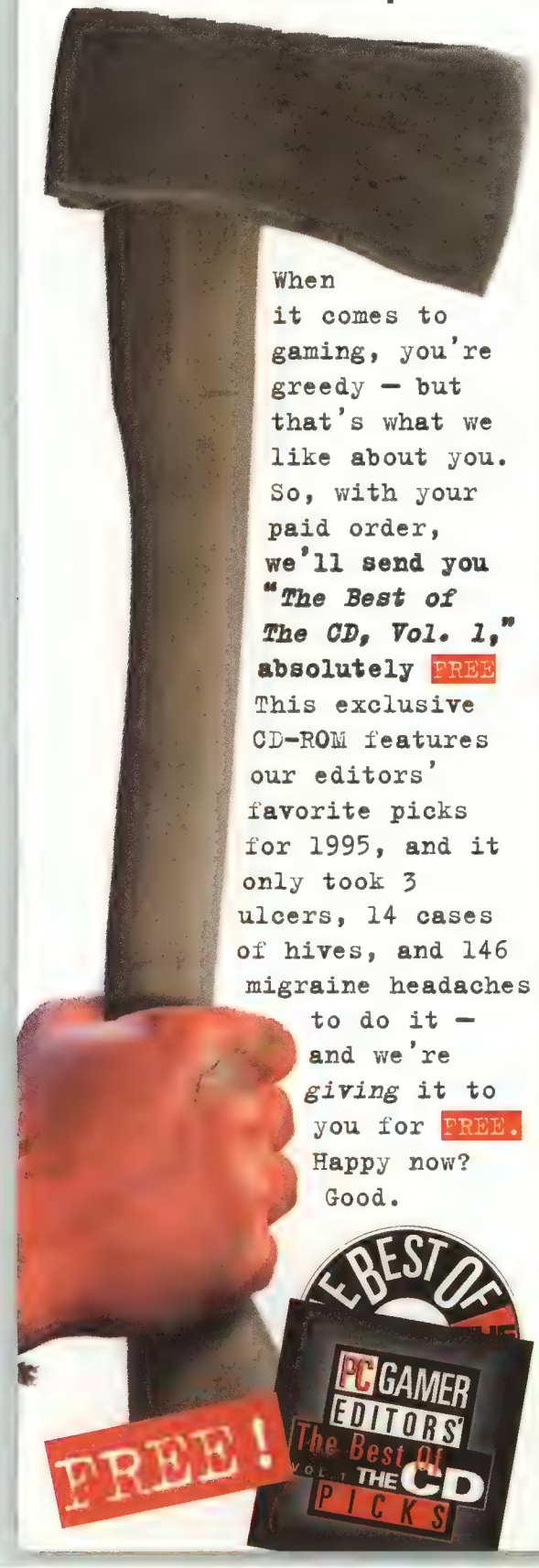
HIGHS: Imaginative concept and strategy elements; beautifully executed graphics.

LOWS: Control feels unresponsive; unusual keyboard commands.

BOTTOM LINE: So close to being a classic, but misses it by just an inch.

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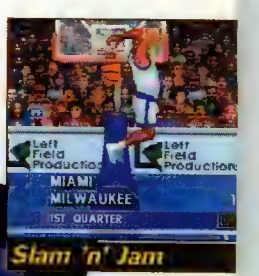
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NEXT GENERATION

Sega Saturn Special

Battleground: Gettysburg

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Historical simulation

Developer: TalonSoft

Publisher: TalonSoft, P.O. Box 632, Forest Hill, MD 21050-0632 (800) 211-6504

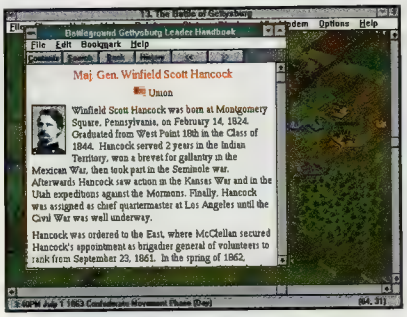
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386/33; Windows 3.1 or Windows '95; 5MB hard-drive space; 4MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486; 8MB RAM

TalonSoft set out to design the best Battle of Gettysburg simulation yet. No question about it: they have.

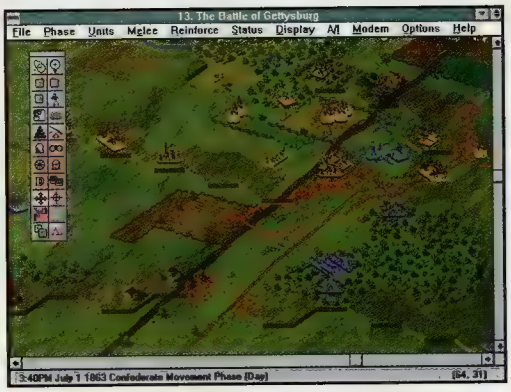
When I looked at an advance beta of this game for a Scoop! two months ago, I was convinced that *Battleground: Gettysburg* had the potential not only to be the best Gettysburg sim ever published, but maybe the best Civil War simulation ever designed for the PC.

Now that I've fallen under the spell of the final version — with its extra scenarios and exciting cut-away video clips — I'm certain of it.

What makes *BGG* so special? First of all, the *look* of it. Never before has the pastoral landscape of mid-19th-century America been rendered in such exquisite detail; nor has the epic sweep, the ebb and flow of this huge battle, been captured on a computer screen with such fidelity.



Officers are rated on their ability to "rally" and to add impact to melee attacks; check out the online handbook to learn more about their abilities.



The full-scene option, suggested by customer feedback, is a new feature, and one that adds considerably to the dramatic visual appeal.

Remember the first time you saw Atlanta's famous Cyclorama painting of the battle, how it took your breath away? That's the emotion this game produces: it's as if you were in a tethered balloon, floating high above the rolling landscape, watching brigades and regiments execute their deadly choreography.

Second, the engine that worked wonders for *Battleground: Ardennes* reproduces Civil War tactics with a degree of authenticity that will delight the pickiest grognard, but also with a clarity and accessibility that will turn a novice gamer into an expert in short order.

By switching back and forth from the top-down two-dimensional view — useful for observing the overall battle's evolution and for plotting strategic moves — to the close-up 3D perspective, you get the best of both traditional styles of wargaming.

Like elegant hand-painted miniatures, the regiments deploy in lines or columns, deliver volley fire, charge in for melee combat, and leave casualties strewn on the ground when the tide of battle moves on. You also get the more traditional God's-eye view of the battlefield, enabling you to observe the Big Picture with an omniscience that a real Civil War commander could only envy.

As was true with *Battleground: Ardennes*, each clash of arms is accompanied by a brief, situation-specific, full-color video clip supplied by an outfit called Freedom Productions, which specializes in documentaries culled from Civil War reenactments all over the country. These are more than just chrome (wait until you see the violence of the "melee" clips!) and add considerably to the dramatic impact of the game.

The more technical aspects of Civil War combat — supply and leadership influence — are handled simply, cleanly, logically. When a unit's base changes to red and its ammo icon shows "empty," you simply pull that unit out of line and direct it to the nearest supply wagon (there are never enough of these to go around, of course, but then that was usually the case in real Civil War battles).

As for sheer playability, well, this is one of those games that will have your wife knocking at the study door, testily inquiring if you intend to skip supper altogether, or would you prefer her to slip a plate of hardtack under the door. It's that enthralling.

TalonSoft promised us something special in this game, and they did so in the face of considerable skepticism from the hard-core fanatics that any Civil War game could be *that* good.

Well, it is. They delivered. It's simply the best Gettysburg simulation ever released in the PC format.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

90%

HIGHS: Magnificent graphics, near-perfect interface; dramatic use of video clips.

LOWS: A few might-have-been scenarios would have been nice.

BOTTOM LINE: This is a classic wargame in every respect.



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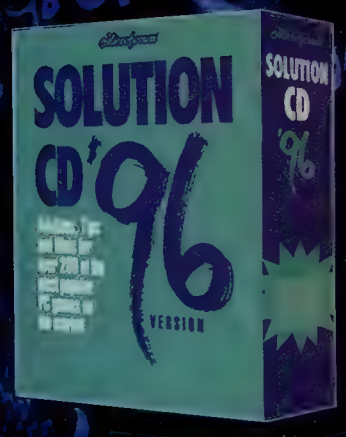
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Product Information Number 131

Build 'Em, Fly 'Em, Land 'Em

T. Liam McDonald



Last year turned out to be a pretty busy one all around for Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*, from the final batch of programs and add-ins to Microsoft's acquisition of The Bruce Artwick Organization (BAO). And, by and large, I managed to miss all of it in this column, so this month I'm taking a look back at how the wonderful world of *Flight Simulator* grew in 1995.

Let's start with the December news: MS bought BAO, the designers of the *Flight Sim* programs, and are relocating many of the programmers to MS headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Under the terms of the agreement, Bruce Artwick will consult with Microsoft in the design and development of new titles, with the first expected title to be (not surprisingly) *MS Flight Simulator for Windows 95*.

Microsoft also released *Flight Sim 5.1*, a CD-ROM port that made a number of important changes to the game. There are 200 additional airports in the CD version now that the entire world is mapped, with all seven continents depicted in graphics supplements that load on-the-fly (so to speak). Graphics have been polished a bit, and the sim's weather system is now more realistic. Version 5.1 also includes some flight model changes, and it addresses other realism issues.

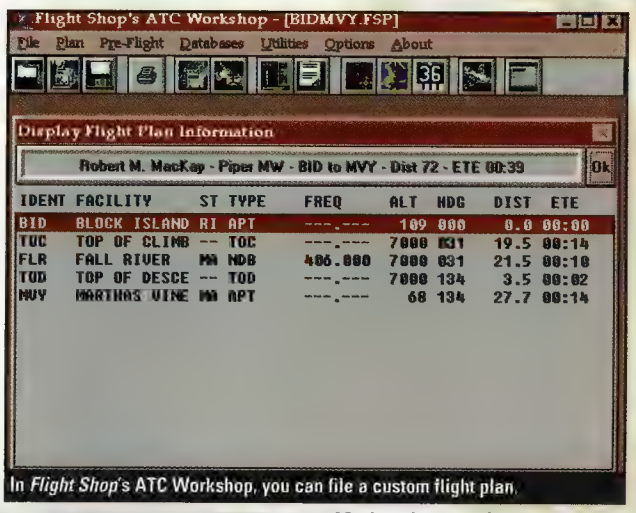
Three new scenery packs were also published in 1995, including Japan, the Caribbean, and Hawaii. All look good, with some special treats like erupting volcanoes and other special tours thrown in.

BAO is catering to the hard-core sim market with two expansion programs for *Flight Sim*: *Tower* and *Flight Shop*. *Tower* is actually a stand-alone program that can tie, via modem, into another computer running *Flight Sim*. An air-traffic controller program, it is obviously for very dedicated flight buffs. You have the chance to control incoming and outgoing air traffic at O'Hare, Washington National, or an imaginary airport in the west.



Here's something unusual: a Hornet on the tarmac in *MS Flight Sim 5.1* courtesy of *Flight Shop*.

1995 was a very good year for fans of Microsoft's venerable *Flight Simulator*; they got a new CD version, some nice new scenery discs, and a couple of intriguing expansion packages.



In *Flight Shop*'s ATC Workshop, you can file a custom flight plan.

By typing commands and using BRITE and ASDE radar displays, you direct planes to the proper runways and handle all the issues related to landing.

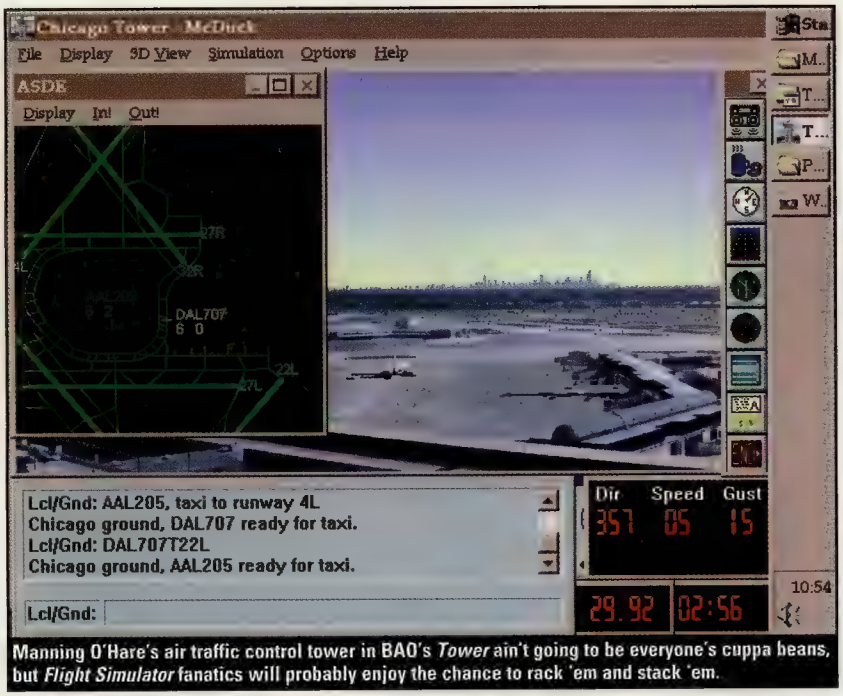
I personally found this one about as much fun as picking ticks off of my dog, but I realize there are certainly people who will find this a fascinating experience.

Definitely more up my street is *Flight Shop*, which features two Windows-based tools: *ATC Workshop* and *Aircraft Factory*.

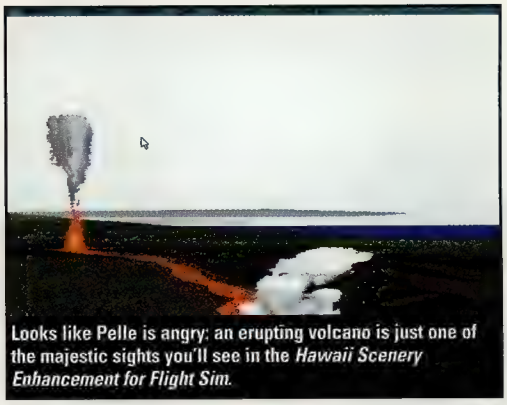
ATC Workshop provides a wide set of tools to use for making your own special mission and flight paths. You can use it to set up a custom flight plan complete with random events, such as engine failures or storms. It's a very nice addition to the *Flight Sim* family.

Even better is the *Aircraft Factory*, which lets you design all the specs and flight characteristics for your own plane. Based on an interface intended to look like an aircraft factory, you can make blueprints for a new plane, create individual parts such as engine or intakes, assemble and paint it, assign flight dynamics, and then fly it in *Flight Sim*.

This is definitely not for everybody, since it takes a prodigious amount of knowledge and understanding to do this right (and the manual



Manning O'Hare's air traffic control tower in BAO's *Tower* ain't going to be everyone's cuppa beans, but *Flight Simulator* fanatics will probably enjoy the chance to rack 'em and stack 'em.



Looks like Pelle is angry: an erupting volcano is just one of the majestic sights you'll see in the *Hawaii Scenery Enhancement for Flight Sim.*

only helps somewhat). Still, the package comes with several new, "ready-to-fly" planes such as the U.S. Marines' F/A-18 Hornet, a 747, a DC-3 and several others. All in all, a very nice addition to *Flight Sim.*

Coming Attractions

Several things arrived just as this month's column was going out the door, and I couldn't keep 'em under my hat until next month:

First on deck is the long-awaited *CivNet*, a head-to-head version of *Sid Meier's Civilization* that plays over local area networks, modems, and the Internet (it also offers an old-fashioned "hot seat" option for multiple players using the same computer). This is a Windows title, and early reports indicate that it plays pretty cleanly online.

Next up are the enhancements for Activision's *MechWarrior 2*. The first new mission pack — *Ghost Bear Legacy* — has arrived, and it looks to have a sweet mix of new challenges.

By the time you read this, *NetMech* and *MW2 for Win95* should also be on the shelves. *MW2 for Win95* comes with *NetMech*, but DOS users will need to buy it as an add-on pack.

Last but not least is the continuation of the *Bioforge* saga in the form of a new add-on disk from Origin.

Look for all these exciting things and more in the next thrilling installment of "Extended Play." Ain't the suspense a killer?

PCG

Bug Patches & Cheats

Patches and cheat programs are available on the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer* in the X:\PATCHES directory, in online sources such as the Internet, CompuServe, and America Online, and through game publishers. One good source is The Games Domain on the Internet at *http://www.gamesdomain.co.uk/*. Be warned: it can be slow at times, since it gets a lot of traffic.

Advanced Civilization v.1.01: Fixes many small problems and addresses the Win95 city construction problem.

Ascendancy Antagonizer AI Module and Patch: Due to some criticism that the AI in *Ascendancy* was too easy, Logic Factory has issued an Antagonizer AI patch to make the AI more challenging. There's also a patch available that fixes all known bugs, and this can be downloaded with or without the AI patch. The web site is *http://www.logicfactory.com* and FTP is *ftp.logicfactory.com*.

CivNet: This upgrade is mostly to make hot-seat play more secretive, but it also addresses some multiplayer tech issues.

Comanche 2.01D: This primarily addresses modem compatibility issues.

Command & Conquer 1.18P: Fixes all known bugs and makes some game balance changes.

Flight Sim Toolkit Final Update: Handles a lot of problems; including improved AI dogfighting; torpedo use; team play (red vs. blue); improved AA guns; carrier landings and development; bombers can be constructed and implemented; improved flight model with better thrust ratios.

Frontier Elite: First Encounters v.1.06: General maintenance patch.

Great Naval Battles III v.1.2: General maintenance patch.

HardBall 5 v.5.11: Fixes erroneous "out" call after force was taken off by tagging a runner, and problem which prevented customized stat selections to be reloaded when booting the game.

Harpoon Classic for Windows v.1.55: Fixes various problems and contains the Windows Scenario Editor.

Heretic and Hexen: New driver for the VFX1 virtual reality headset.

The Hive: Update makes the game a bit easier to play.

Mechwarrior 2 Patch for DOS: Addresses such issues as the right side taking more damage than the other on some mechs, added joystick support, and Win95 crashes.

NHL 96: Specifically for playoff lock-ups or problems with playoff games saving to the hard drive.

Rise of the Triad: New driver for the VFX1 headset.

Steel Panthers v.1.2: Test update fixes various bugs and gameplay issues.

The Civil War: 1861-1864 v.1.1: Addresses both the Campaign and Battle AI as well as updating naval battles, city supply, and route planning.

The Road from Sumter to Appomattox: Corrects retreat rule problems, allows Confederate recruiting in Kentucky and Missouri even if under Union control, and corrects other unspecified bugs.

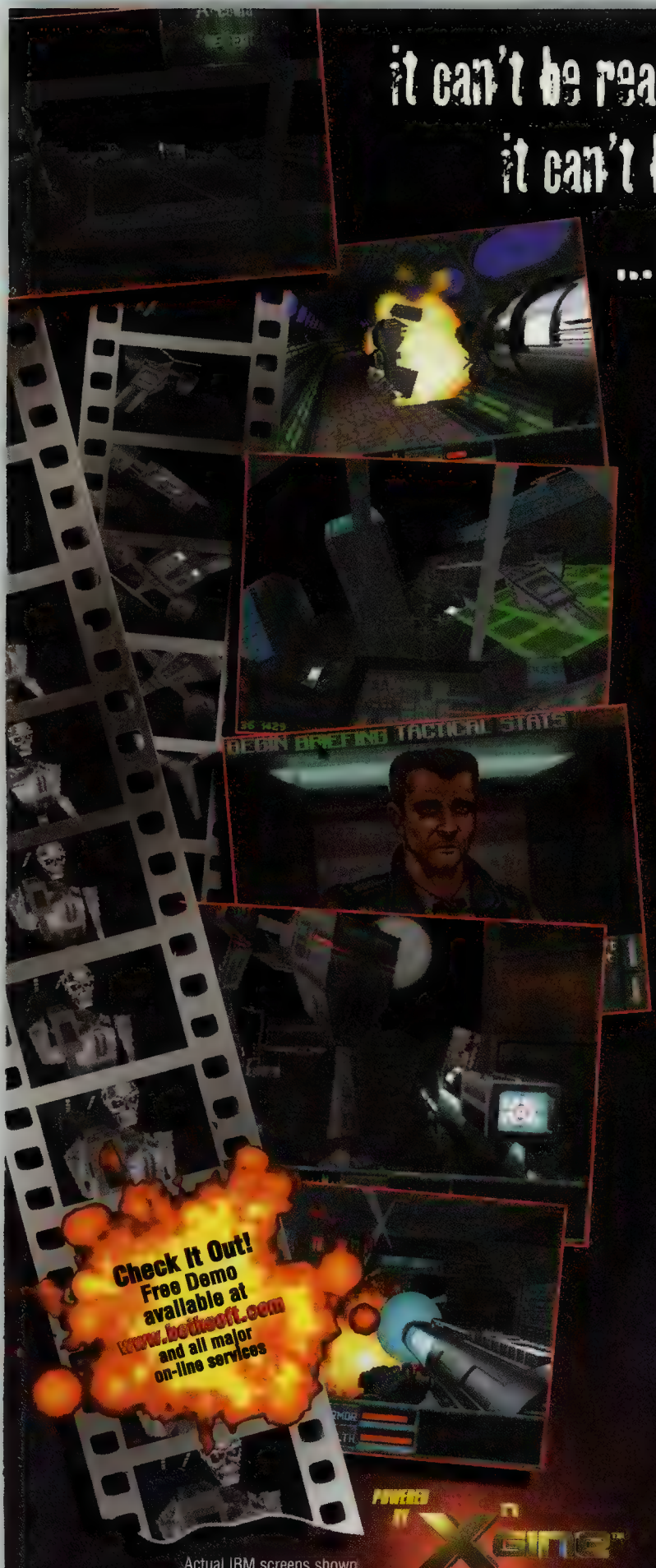
Tower: Update deals with running Windows 3.1 or higher errors.

Werewolf 1.01D: Primarily addresses modem compatibility issues.

Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge: Corrects the divide overflow problem experienced by some users with 486 and Pentium computers.

World Series of Poker v.1.01: Fixes bug in Caribbean Stud.

it can't be reasoned with,
it can't be bargained with...
...and it absolutely will not stop.



Actual IBM screens shown



*"Finally, a game that's worthy of the film license. **Terminator: Future Shock** will make **Dark Forces** seem positively lame."* —PC-ZONE

*"...the more I play **Future Shock** the more it continues to amaze me. It's really quite incredible. I'd expect it to run very slowly considering the amount of graphic detail and amount of on-screen polygons, but it screams!"* —NEWTYPE GAMING

*"If you don't believe our statement, that **Terminator: Future Shock** heralds a new age of 3D games, surpassing all the existing ones, then try out the demo... But you were warned!"* —SCORE

*"Look for **Bethesda Softworks** to have competitors running scared in the near future..."* —Computer Game Review



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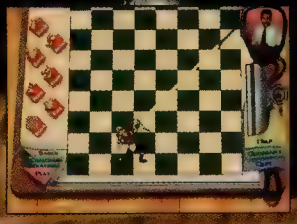
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Ski Beautiful Mount Software

If it snowed in my office, small rodents could ski on the mountains of software; most months, I look at a veritable blizzard of new programs. This month I chose to write about three that seem as different from each other as snowflakes.

Actually, they all have one thing in common: each package tricked me with a deceptive first impression. Edmark's *Strategy Games of the World* seemed trivial at first, but I had never seen a lightweight product from this company before. *Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese* looked attractive, it entertained my son for a while, and it measured up to many other electronic storybooks; still, it seemed a little slushy. And *Jump Start Preschool* inspired a similar sense of discomfort — the program worked well, the activities were educationally sound, but I wondered why you would want your preschooler to learn these things from a computer.

With all that uncertainty — and the high insurance expenses of running a ski resort for mice — weighing heavily on my mind, I reconsidered my initial evaluations. I listened to my gut. Here's what it told me.

Strategy Games of the World

Simple, traditional games like Nine Men's Morris take on a whole new flavor when you play against Leif Ericson. Sailing on a Viking Ship with the first Europeans to head for North America, anyone might startle a bit when the great sea captain slams his fist on the Nine Men's Morris board, causing one of his tokens to jump into position.

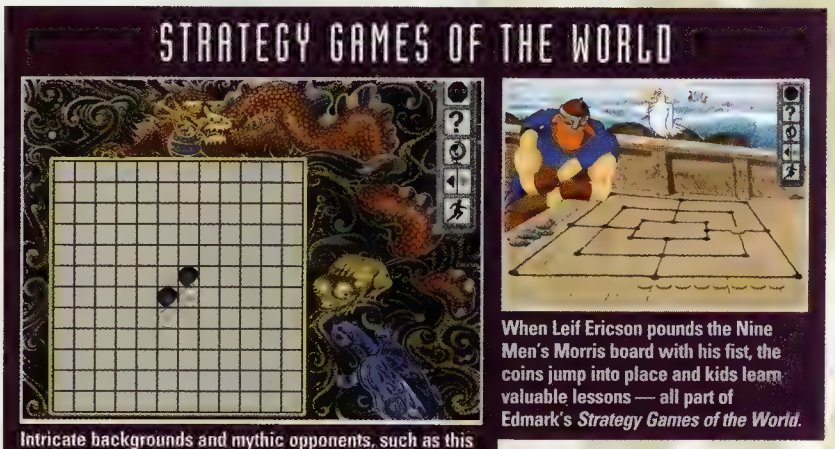
Few people will startle, though, when they find out that this lush background was created by Edmark. The company doesn't release merely average programs, and *Strategy Games of the World* is no exception.

Aimed at children ages 8 to 14, Edmark's latest product features three venerable games: Nine Men's Morris, which has been found in such civilizations as ancient Egypt and Stone-Age Ireland; Mancala, which is played throughout Africa, the Middle East, and the South Pacific; and Go-Moku, which, from the software's documentation, appears to be Japanese in origin. Each game has very simple rules and limited moves. Edmark programmers selected these games because they can be learned in minutes, but mastered over lifetimes.

If the games were all the package offered, it wouldn't be enough; surely, there are shareware versions of these old pastimes. The atmosphere is wonderful, but probably not worth the money, nor the computer resources it takes to run the program.

But we're talking about Edmark, here; of course the games are not all the package offers. The package also offers lessons in developing strategies, not just for defeating fierce Vikings at board games, but also for defeating real problems in the real world. It takes a little time to appreciate the tips and tactics stuffed into *Strategy Games of the World*. For example, a sage-like frog told me not to fear fierce opponents. A little bird told me, "If you can't win with your current strategies, throw them out and start with a new set." These apparent gems of wisdom seemed vacuous to me, but, after several more rounds, the advice became more interesting. A cheetah recommended a seemingly innocuous tactic that set up powerful moves for the future. A seagull pointed out a particularly strong arrangement of playing pieces. Other tips advised me to remember powerful moves and look for opportunities to use them again in future games.

Gaming tips weren't enough for Edmark, though. *Strategy Games of the World* aims to help kids develop a repertoire of strategies for life too, so Edmark included video clips of people in the real world sharing their strategies for problem solving. These Real World Solutions are cleverly related to the games as well. An astronaut recommends planning ahead; a school counselor recommends reviewing events leading up to a crisis; a choreographer recommends choosing an overall pattern and identifying individual moves that fit into that pattern. And the game is packed with loads more. The best strategies, however, rec-



Intricate backgrounds and mythic opponents, such as this Japanese dragon, weave an attractive atmosphere around age-old games of strategy in Edmark's latest product.

When Leif Ericson pounds the Nine Men's Morris board with his fist, the coins jump into place and kids learn valuable lessons — all part of Edmark's *Strategy Games of the World*.



What do preschoolers, geese, and a Viking explorer have in common? Not a lot, but they all appear in new programs that surprised Heidi in good ways and bad.

ommend persistence, learning from mistakes rather than running from them.

Overall, *Strategy Games of the World* grew on me slowly and kept growing. That's part of the beauty of the program. Interest in these games will last indefinitely as players become more skilled. The strategy tips become increasingly pertinent both for the games and for life. You can't beat endless fun and educational value.

Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese



Cabbages that transform into skulls, carrots that snarl and growl, and several other hot spots are more gruesome than necessary.

Take a nasty witch, a gaggle of wisecracking geese, and two wide-eyed innocents lost in a forest. What do you get? You get a Russian folk tale with a modern accent. Davidson's latest entry in the electronic storybook market is a humorous rendition of an old, familiar tale.

Part of a series of interactive folk tales from around the world, *Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese* will feel familiar even to people who have never heard the story before. It has elements of Hansel and Gretel as well as a story used for Jim Henson's movie, *Labyrinth*, and Maurice Sendak's book, *Outside Over There*.

As a story, the original tale is powerful, creating a terrifying conflict with bleak odds for Tasha, the main character. In the end, the goodness of the good guy defeats the badness of the bad guy, and all terrors and heartaches are forgiven, just as you would expect from a story of such mythic proportions.

Davidson's take on the story isn't nearly as powerful, though. The overall tone of the tale is diluted by the wisecracks, the lack of characterization of the hero, and the incidental animation that is profusely sprinkled throughout the program. If the witch is so powerful and so cruel, why does she let the geese make fun of her? Her credibility as a fearsome foe wanes as the story progresses. What is it about Tasha that inspires the forest creatures to save her and her brother? The story tells very little about her. And how do



Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese features excellent technical feats, such as smooth animation and great sound, but the incidental animation sequences detract from the flavor of the story.

sneezing chimneys, coughing pipes, and other slapstick sequences fit into the time or atmosphere of the story? Some of these interjections were actually gruesome — vegetables turning into skulls, dandelions growling ferociously, an eerie cow-skull mooing and drooling. If Davidson wants to introduce kids to Russian folk culture, the company should make the point-and-click spots enrich the setting with Russian themes.

Although the plot stumbles a bit, the programming struts. *Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese* features some of the best animation I've seen in a cartoon-style program. The backgrounds nearly shimmer. The characters are obviously animated in fewer colors than the background, but they move smoothly through the scenes. Even with their limited colors, most blend well with the landscape. The voice characterizations are fine, and the geese, unlike all the other characters, have strong personalities.

My four-year-old son enjoyed *Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese*, laughing at the goofy antics of flip-flopping animals and slithering socks. He eagerly pointed out various schticks to me, and he ran the program several times. It's a safe bet that most kids will be equally amused. However, I wish the storytelling had been as rich as the programming.

Jump Start Preschool

Jump Start Preschool makes one of the best arguments against computers in the preschool curriculum that I have ever encountered. The program works beautifully, but it offers no activity that wouldn't be more valuable using real materials.

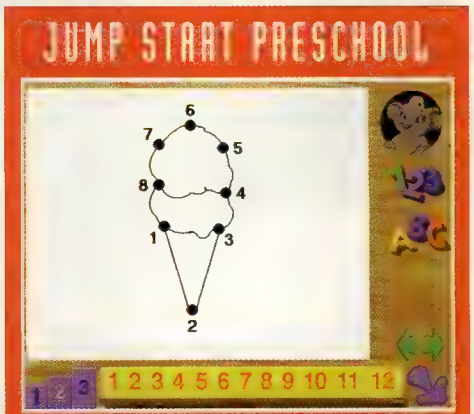
Offering all kinds of important cognitive activities, *Jump Start Preschool* is filled with terrific mental exercises for children. However, motor activity and sensory intake supports intellectual activity, and there's very little of these two vital ingredients in most computer programs.

Young children need to be working with paper and pencils to develop their fine motor skills. They need to be holding the things they are counting, feeling how the weight and shape of the load in their hands changes as they count them out. They need to paint the paint-by-number pictures with real paint that feels squishy under their brushes. They need to work with materials that offer infinite possibilities for new discoveries. Truly, there isn't enough time in the day to do all the concrete things children need to do. We shouldn't whittle away what little time they have by sitting them in front of a computer.

This doesn't mean you should never let your child explore one-to-one correspondences on your home computer. It doesn't mean you shouldn't let your child be consumed by an electronic coloring book once in a while. It simply means that a computer program is not even equal to a concrete activity for young kids, let alone a better alternative. And in preschool settings, the thin experience of computer learning isn't what you're paying for.

And even though *Jump Start Preschool* is a fine example of educational software, don't buy it if you think it excuses you from sitting on the floor of your kitchen with a bowl of beans or a cigar box of crayons. Your child needs to make the mess, among other things, and it helps them learn how to clean one up.

PCG



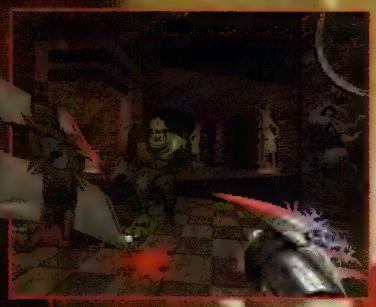
Although *Jump Start Preschool* offers many good activities, they seem thin and one-dimensional; any one of them would develop a child's skills more fully if implemented in the concrete world.



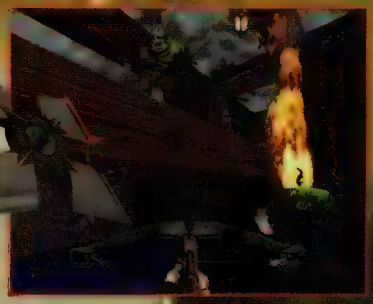
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Product Information Number 168

Faster Than the Speed of Sound

Dan Bennett



You'll have to excuse me if I seem a little emotional; I just had to let a friend go, and my life's a little emptier for it.

I can't tell you this friend's name, but the initials are Falcon Mach V.

I recently had the pleasure of trying out one of these amazing PCs from Falcon Northwest (268 South Bayshore Dr., Coos Bay, OR 97420, (800) 258-6778), and I can't tell you how hard it was to send it back when my time was up.

In keeping with Falcon's philosophy of catering to gamers by offering the hottest technology in a complete package, the Mach V I evaluated was a 133MHz Pentium PC with all the trimmings: Intel's Triton chipset; 16MB of RAM; a 1.6 gigabyte hard drive; a quad-speed CD-ROM drive; a Sound Blaster 16 sound card; Sony speakers and subwoofer; a 17" CTX monitor; and a CH Flightstick Pro joystick.

Wow. Where do I start?

I guess the thing that strikes most people first about the Mach V is how bleedin' *fast* it is. Anybody can build a fast PC around a 133MHz Pentium chip, but this puppy's state-of-the-art pipelined burst cache and EDO RAM make it scorchingly quick.

Even games with notoriously high graphic detail and low frame rates were as smooth as silk on the Mach V. You can bet *U.S. Navy Fighters*, *NASCAR Racing*, and *Flight Unlimited* were among the first games I installed on this machine — and I was very pleasantly surprised at how smoothly they all ran, even in their high-resolution, Super VGA modes with all the detail options cranked up. *MechWarrior 2* is great fun even on a fast 486, but it's a whole new game on a machine like the Mach V.

And if you think *Doom* is already as good as it can get on your fast 486, you haven't played it on a *really* fast machine. It's not just faster; it's much smoother, which means you can spin on a dime and fix your shotgun's sights on the enemy with pinpoint accuracy. On the Mach V, you're not just an ill-fated space marine — you're Clint Eastwood.

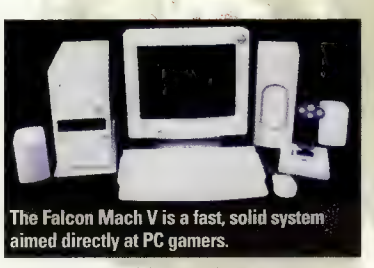
All the Mach V's other trimmings were impressive, too. A 17" monitor isn't a necessity for gaming — and it's not standard equipment on the Mach V — but if you've gotten used to staring at a 14" or 15" screen, the larger monitor will feel like virtual reality. That extra real estate can make a huge difference.

The quad-speed Toshiba CD-ROM drive was nice and quick — but it's bound to seem sluggish compared to the 8-speed drive that's now *standard equipment* on the Mach V (no, that's not a misprint; we're talking about a data transfer rate of 1,200K per second).

The Western Digital hard drive's generous 1.62GB capacity is only surpassed by its amazing speed, provided by an Enhanced IDE interface and 10ms access time. Between the hard drive and the fast CD-ROM drive, I got through even the biggest game installations in record time. If data flew through this PC any faster, it would hum like high-power lines.

The audio end of the Mach V isn't spectacular, but it's more than adequate. A Sound Blaster 16 ensures total compatibility with any game on the market, and the combination of shielded stereo speakers and subwoofer provide plenty of volume. The Sony speakers don't have quite the high-frequency response as similar combos from Altec Lansing or Jazz, but they crank out enough low-end punch to rattle any gamer's teeth.

The Mach V has a couple of flaws that keep it from being the perfect PC: Falcon Northwest gave their PC a feature that lets you change the clock speed displayed in the LED readout on the case by pressing and holding the reset button. That saves you from messing with DIP switches or jumpers when you upgrade your processor, but the numbers tended to "drift" on the review system. More than once, I powered the Mach V up, only to find it had decided it was now an 87MHz or 184MHz machine.



The Falcon Mach V is a fast, solid system aimed directly at PC gamers.

Another problem has to do with the system's high-speed dual joystick port, which seems to have trouble with Windows 95. Even with the single gameport built into the Sound Blaster 16 disabled, Win95 continued to detect it *and* the ports on the dual-port card, which caused conflicts that made it virtually impossible to correctly calibrate a joystick. Games that ran in a full MS-DOS session (i.e., after a reboot) worked fine, but joystick control was basically nonexistent under Win95. I finally took the drastic measure of removing the dual-port card and enabling the gameport on the SB16, which resulted in perfect calibration.

Neither of those problems is a really big deal, but they're significant annoyances in a system so expensive — and so polished in every other respect.

At press time, Falcon Northwest quoted a price of $4,081 for the Mach V with all the options the review system had; by the time you read this, it should go for less than four grand (the new 166MHz Pentium is available, too).

If you're willing to do a little comparison shopping with some of the other direct-mail system dealers, you'll almost certainly find a comparable system for fewer greenbacks. It *might* even be as well built and use the same premium components as the Mach V. But if you want to cut out the detective work and be certain you're getting a complete, deadly-serious PC designed by hard-core gamers *for* hard-core gamers, give Falcon Northwest a call.

PCG

So you say you're ready to quit playing the upgrade game and get yourself a complete new system designed especially for serious gamers? Your dream machine may be waiting for you in the great Pacific Northwest.

Springtime Sites For Sore Eyes

If it sometimes seems as though the linked-from-everywhere "clnet central" computer network is becoming the Big Brother of online information services, consider this: So what? They're doing a damned fine job, and they've just centralized their huge shareware library on the World Wide Web.

Log on at *http://www.shareware.com*, where over 160,000 software titles are listed by popularity, new arrival, and subject matter (there's also a new featured title every day). While you're there, don't forget to subscribe to Shareware Dispatch, their free weekly newsletter E-mailed to your very own electronic mailbox. Go on — give that Microsoft Mail/Win95 Inbox something useful to do.

In other shareware news, my mention of *AOHell* in the January issue prompted reader Scott "Sir Wolfe" Atherton to write and inform me of BPS Software's *PowerTools for AOL*, a safe and *legal* enhancement program for the pretty-but-dumb America Online.

PowerTools is a set of powerful, professional-level tools and utilities for using AOL more productively, more enjoyably, and at less expense (and it lets you get back that busy cursor!). It gives casual users an entire suite of new functions and provides AOL Hosts, Guides and staff with a wide array of productivity tools, all fully integrated into the America Online toolbar. And it's completely customizable, as well.

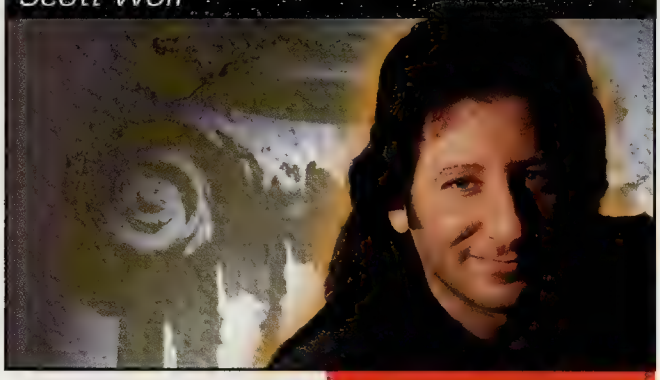
PowerTools' Control Panel attaches to the top of your AOL window and provides buttons and controls for many tasks, including an Action Recorder, Hotlist Manager, Session Clip Manager, PowerChat window, IM Manager, PowerSearch, Auto SignOn, Text Phrase Manager, .WAV Manager, Master Keyword Directory, Log Manager, Session Timer and Alarms, and a versatile Billing Log.

Registration for this revelation is $29.95 (there's a 20 percent discount if you register before the end of the 20-day evaluation period). You can download the *PowerTools* shareware from AOL (PWRT1_91.EXE — Keyword WINFORUM) or at BPS' Home Page on the web: *http://www. bpssoft.com*. You can also E-mail Brad O'Keefe as *BPS Brad@aol.com*.

While at the BPS home page, I also downloaded an amazing demo of the *ChromaZone Screen Saver* by Steve Gibson, author of the *SpinRite* hard-drive utility. Written in pure assembly language, *ChromaZone* takes up just 132K of hard-drive space, yet delivers limitless interactively editable, three-dimensional, animated, multi-million color (these are Steve's words, by the way) screen presentations that can automatically be displayed whenever your computer is idle.

The demo lets you sample more than one hundred different examples and fool around with their settings, although you can't save your preferences. But wait — there's more! If you mention that you snagged it at the BPS Software web page, Steve will give you a special discount off the regular $39.95 price. That's right, the full, registered version of *ChromaZone* can be your for only $24.95! E-mail him as stevegibso@aol.com. Tell him you heard about it in *PCG*, and he may even knock off another $1.09! (Then again, he may not.)

Scott Wolf



If you think there's no better way to celebrate Spring than sitting indoors at your computer, Scott's got plenty of cool web sites to keep you busy.

My Back Pages

Yes, these are some of the bookmarks stored in my own personal Netscape, Mosaic, and AOL web browsers. You may enjoy or deride them as you see fit.

• *http://www.hooked.net/users.eob3/simcap.htm* — Nestled comfortably in Calana Software's warm web is Simcap, Inc.'s *Intercept, The Journal For Combat Flight Simulation Pilots*. Calana's web site also has a convenient link to the *PCG* site, as well.

• *http://www.elo.com/elomag* — *Enemy Lock On!, The Military FlightSim Magazine*, a 'zine published in the United Kingdom.

• *http://wwwedu.cs.utwente.nl/~kamps/usnf.html* — Bart Kamps' unofficial, but excellent, *U.S. Navy Fighters* home page in the Netherlands (be sure to note that there's no dot after "www" in the site's URL).

• *http://www.fender.com* — It's the Super Strat Site — home of Fender Guitars!

• *http://www.gibson.com* — Hungry for photos of sunburst Les Pauls? Gibson Guitars now serving.

• *http://www.mguitar.com* — C.F. Martin, the Harley Davidson of American-made acoustic guitars.

• *http://tigerden.com/Wolf-park/Welcome.html* — Wolf Park in Battle Ground, Indiana. I was a member before feeding my own animals bled my wallet dry.

• *http://www.teleport.com/~wnorton/wolf.html* — Wolf Haven International, home of some of Sanctuary Wood's *Wolf* game stars.

• *http://www.ecst.csuchico.edu/~gfehrer/* — The Wolf Dunn, for owners of and those interested in wolf/dog hybrids.

• *http://www.doonesbury.com* — Garry Trudeau's been ripping the 'net in his comic strip lately; now he's officially part of it, courtesy of Mindscape Online Publishing.

• *http://www.nlm.nih.gov* — The National Library of Medicine, where the Visible Woman, a computer-generated cadaver, resides.

• *http://www.kzsu.stanford.edu/uwi/br/off-world.html* — With Westwood Studios hard at work on the long-awaited *Blade Runner* game, this Off World site for all things replicant should be hopping again. I still play Vangelis' Blade Runner soundtrack CD while I'm writing this crap.

Well, I know it's time to quit when I feel something on my shoulder and it turns out to be the floor. I'll bid you all a fond farewell until next month. Be Seeing You.

PCG

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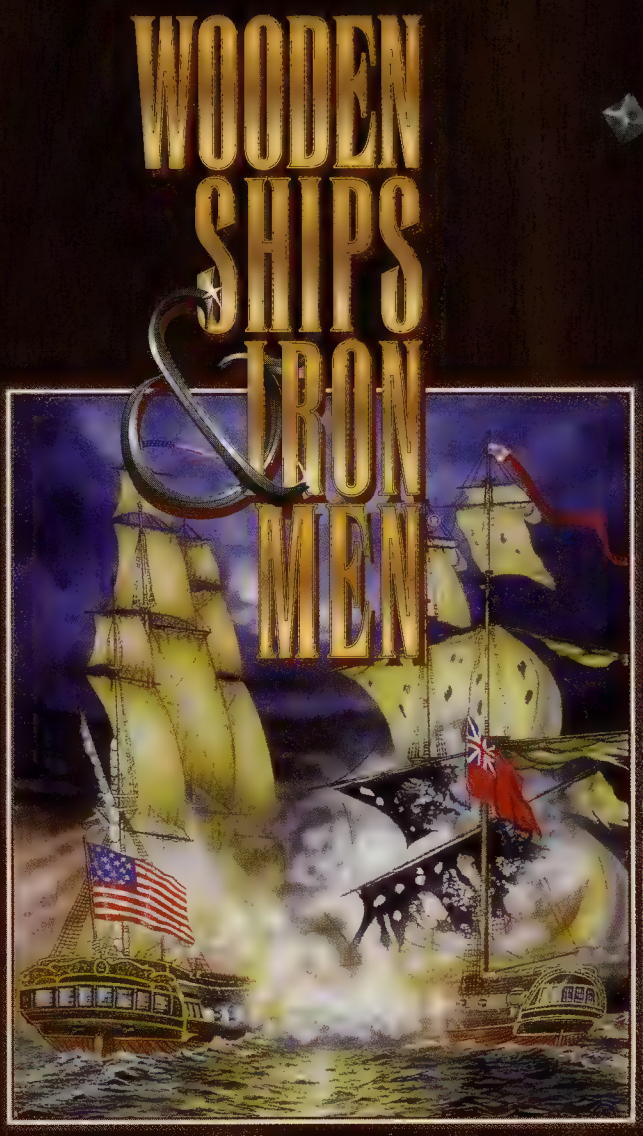
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Don't Give Up the Ship!

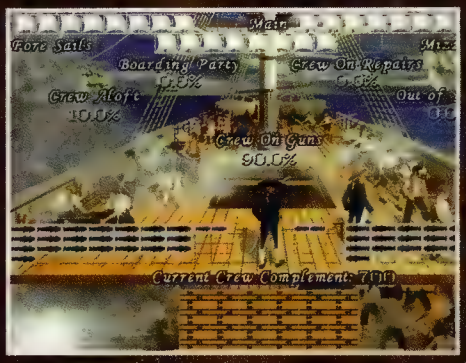
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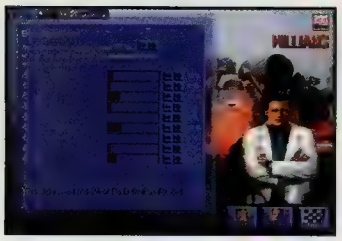
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Product Information Number 95



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Product Information Number 160

A Tale of Two Licenses

We all remember the glorious project that was Sierra/Dynamix's *Betrayal at Krondor*. As adventure games go, it had enough RPG background and character development to stand out above the sea of mediocre point-and-click, object-collection fests. Players were truly brought into the world of Raymond E. Feist's Riftwar novels and introduced to loads of new characters, locations, and magic designed to mesh with the existing stories so players could follow one story from beginning to end with the game making up the middle chapters.

The gameplay was great as well; *Betrayal* was one of the first roleplaying games to successfully pull off the first-person 3D perspective. Combat was easy to learn, but offered enough changing situations as time went on to keep players from getting bored. A simple magic system and plenty of strange traps and items added just enough of a mystical atmosphere to the game to inspire wonder, but never enough so that combat broke down into a spell-slinging competition. In fact, the only thing that was really wrong with the game was that the graphics and sound were a touch weak, but, hey, nobody's perfect, right?

So what happened? If you make a great game, and you sell a lot of copies, why not make a lot of sequels? It seems like *Doom* had just gotten settled on my hard drive when *Doom II* and *Heretic* showed up, so where was my follow-up RPG? Well, as it turns out, roleplayer's patience has paid off. During the next couple of months, we'll be seeing not only a sequel to the Riftwar Saga, but a follow-up fantasy title based on the original Krondor engine. Why is so much showing up so late? The story goes something like this:

In order to make games based on the Riftwar universe, Sierra/Dynamix had to purchase the rights to Feist's story from Feist, who happily agreed and even helped a bit in the game design. *Betrayal at Krondor* was completed, packed with a manual into shiny boxes, and shipped out to stores. Everyone was happy.

Now here's the critical point: The first version of *Betrayal* was sent out exclusively on floppy disks (lots and lots of them, as I remember) at a time when CD-ROM gaming was first poking its nose into the PC arena. Much to everyone's disappointment, the game just didn't sell very well. The company decided that this just wasn't going to be a profitable venture after all, packed up all of their Krondor goodies, and sold the rights to the universe back to Feist. Everyone was unhappy.


Trent C. Ward

The funny thing about all of this is that when Sierra decided later to squeeze what money they could out of what they thought was a flop by re-releasing it on CD-ROM, it sold scads of copies. Reviewers loved it, people wanted it, and there was general harmony in the RPG and adventure communities. Except for one little hitch....

By all accounts, Feist had enjoyed working with the gaming medium, and was very interested in seeing his characters come to life again. After talking with a few different interested parties, he ended up reselling his Riftwar license to 7th Level, a California-based software company that immediately began production on a sequel called *Return to Krondor*. Working with Feist, the team created a whole new set of characters (not wishing to get to close to the potential legal trap of reusing the cast of *Betrayal*) and also starting work on an all-new interface.

So far, the results have been pretty impressive. The new game creates an interesting blend of art and technology by taking sizable polygonal characters and moving them around in a 3D space mapped out on the screen with the use of painted 2D backgrounds (yes, I know it doesn't sound like it would work, but does ... trust me). Best of all, Feist has helped a good bit with the story line to ensure that it will fit with the existing books and games.

The thing is, even without the advantage of the Riftwar license, *Betrayal at Krondor* would have been a great game. The chapter-based structure, the smooth interface, the object interaction — all of these things would have worked just as well with Conan, or Elric, or even Clifford the Big Red Dog (well, maybe not Clifford...).

So what do you do with a great RPG system and no license? You make up your own story line, of course, and that's exactly what Sierra has done with their latest project, *Antara*. Hiring an all-new development team, the company has taken everything that was great about *Betrayal*, replaced all of the characters and objects with new ones of their own design, and set about fixing the few problems with the first title that people complained about (read: graphics and sound). According to the designer, *Antara*'s graphics will run at 640x480 resolution with 256 colors, and *may* feature digital audio as well. A new magic system is being added, along with some truly cool new weapons and magic items (how about a magic chain that links your party together and disperses damage taken to any single member across the entire group?). The end result is another cool product, and the unique setting ensures that, even if initial sales are weak, Sierra can't run off and sell the rights to it (meaning we could see sequels in the future).

Both *Antara* and *Return to Krondor* are getting ready to ship, and it's going to be a hard call (and one that I, fortunately, don't yet have to make) as to which one will be the stronger title. Either way, the long wait to continue the adventure we all started a few years ago is at an end. Now, if we can just get those guys at New World Computing to get that next Might and Magic game on the shelves... PCG

It looked like the critically-acclaimed *Betrayal at Krondor* would never have a sequel, but it's about to find new life in two different incarnations.

The Civil War According to American Heritage

One of the nicest things my parents did for me, when my obsession with history surfaced in junior high school, was to give me a birthday subscription to *American Heritage*. The magazine is still around, but it's hard to spot on the newsstand because it long ago gave up its distinctive format: deluxe hardcover books with full-color reproductions of historical paintings.

AH also published a series of big, lavishly illustrated coffee-table books on all the major American wars (their World War One volume, with text by S.L.A. Marshall, is perhaps the best book on the subject ever designed for the non-specialist reader), and their Civil War history, with text by Bruce Catton, was a landmark production in every respect.

I was delighted, therefore, to receive for review a big, lavishly designed multimedia set titled *American Heritage: The Civil War*, which promised not only a hour's worth of exciting re-enactment footage and discussions of the war's causes and issues by noted historian James McPherson, but a full-scale "strategy game" as a bonus.

American Heritage has published boardgames before, back in the 1970s, and while they were certainly pitched to the novice gamer, they were very respectable introductory-level wargames. As I opened the box and loaded the two CDs (under Windows 3.1 — I *refuse* to buy Windows 95 until it becomes absolutely necessary, which will probably be sometime in the next, oh, ninety days), I was hoping for the best.

I should have been tipped off by the fact that this is not, strictly speaking, an *American Heritage* production, but rather a too-many-cooks concoction blending the efforts of Simon & Schuster Interactive (a company that was once known as a publisher of Serious Books, but which has now become every bit as pandering and profit-driven as the worst schlock publishers in the business), and Byron Preiss Multimedia (which did its best work publishing underground comics back in the 1970s).

McPherson's "discussions" of the war's issues and themes are cogent, but all too brief. The "animated battle maps" consist of four or five panels each, superficially described by a "virtual host" who fades in and out, like a ghost, and vaguely resembles George C. Scott dressed in a cravat. These animated campaign segments are so terse, fragmented, and disjointed that *unless you already know* how the Battle of Antietam shaped up, you'll end up more confused than enlightened.


William R. Trotter

As for all that exciting re-enactment footage, I never got to see more than two or three seconds worth of it, because every time I clicked on the Timeline to access a campaign, the game crashed, and the screen displayed either "Unable to read drive D" or "Application Error." An hour-long chat with a very helpful Simon & Schuster rep revealed no discernible reason why my system was not fully compatible with the program. It happens.

As for the bonus strategy game, I had high hopes at first. The *scale* felt right, the *time scale* felt right, and the interface was simplicity itself. Movement and transfers-of-command were easily accomplished. Playing the Confederates (of course), I chose to go on the strategic defensive in Virginia, beefing up the garrison in West Virginia so as to retain control of that quadrant of the line, and adopt a cut-and-thrust war of maneuvers in the west. Success at first attended my efforts, as the rebels quickly seized and managed to hold on to St. Louis.

And then, in the autumn of 1861, things began to get screwy. A replacements screen appeared, offering me 40,000 recruits. I created a new force for the East, the "Army of the Carolinas," gave them 25,000 men, and put Robert E. Lee in charge, headquartered in Raleigh. Then I hit the Enact button to confirm my orders ... and the entire army vanished. Oh, it was still listed as being on the CSA roster, it just never appeared on the map.

Next, the game helpfully informed me that the "Army of Missouri" was now, for some unfathomable reason, located in *Mexico*.

Battles were handled in the same slipshod manner: units converged, as ordered, and sometimes overlapped each other on the map — presumably engaged in combat. But nothing ever appeared on the map to show that a battle had taken place — by accessing a Field Report, I got a list of engagements and winners/losers, but *no casualty figures*.

After that point, matters just became hopelessly fuzzy. I began to wonder how anyone could design such a game and leave out something as basic as a combat icon or casualty stats. And the game itself began to crash in the winter of 1861-62. I tried periodic saving to get around the problem, but was informed, upon rebooting, that "this Civil War file does not exist" even though the save game function had apparently worked fine.

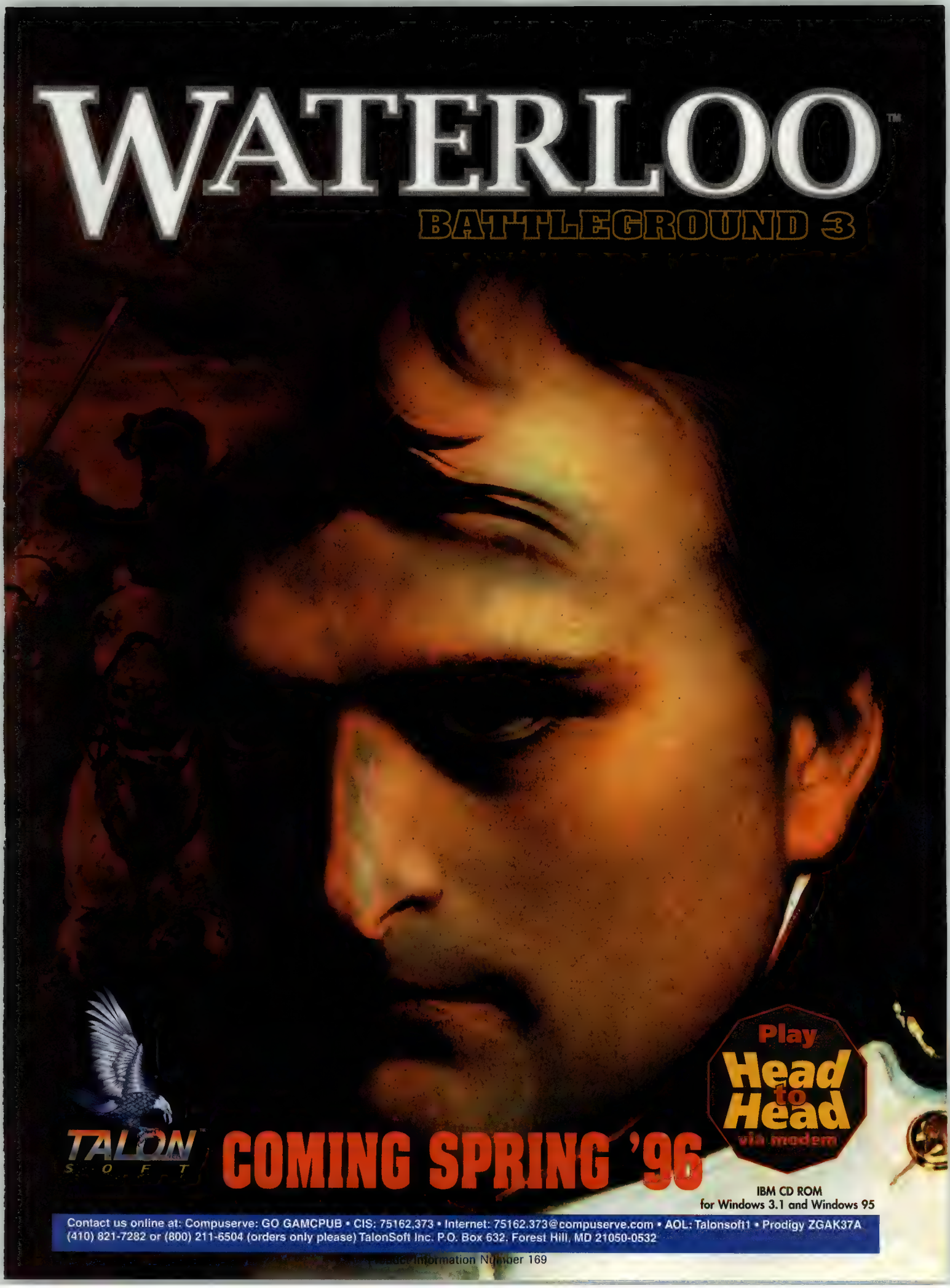
In short, this entire package is a farrago of bugs, bewildering design choices (how much more effort would it have taken to make the combat system halfway realistic?) and missed opportunities.

What a disappointment.

For novice gamers and students with a budding interest in the Civil War, the Ted Turner/Swfte *Gettysburg* package remains a good choice. It packs more information on one CD than this product does on two; the game portion, while still simplistic, is at least *playable*; and as a bonus, you get to hear Shelby Foote's bourbon-mellow narration.

PCG

The new multimedia Civil War extravaganza based on a well-known American history magazine turns out to be two CDs' worth of disappointment and frustration.



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Destruction Derby
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43416 **$37**



War Hawk
by Sony Interactive
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44942 **$41**



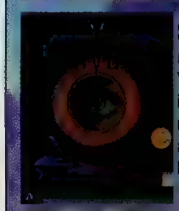
Worms
by GTE
An ultra fast-paced game of team strategy for up to 16 players. It's a little bit Lemmings and a lotta bit Terminator!
49259 **$33**



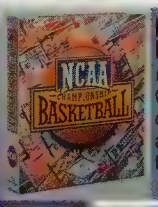
Fast Attack
by Sierra On-Line
Command powerful US fast attack submarines, utilize state-of-the-art sensors, decoys and weapons. Hunt for the enemy!
37519 **$44**



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by Sierra On-Line
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45750 **$30**



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by GTE
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47318 **$44**



Pandora Directive
by Access
Chris Jones is PI Tex Murphy, last seen in Under A Killing Moon. Also features Barry Corbin of "Northern Exposure."
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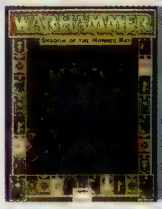
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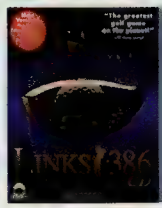
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Sierra Snaps Up Papyrus

When Sierra snapped up Papyrus in December, computer gamers — especially fans of racing sims — held their collective breath. What will the acquisition mean for Papyrus, the king of hard-core racing simulations?

Concern among gamers is understandable. Acquisition of software developers has been a mixed bag, at least as far as the quality of the product is concerned. Sierra has recently bolstered its position as the largest entertainment software company by swallowing several other companies, and the sometimes product lines have not fared as well under new ownership.

When Dynamix released *Front Page Sports: Football* through Sierra several years ago, it was clearly the finest football sim on the market. It still is, but as Sierra gradually absorbed Dynamix, *FPSF* has almost stopped evolving. It looks a little better, and each year's new version incorporates the latest rules changes, but it's basically the same game as the original.

Sim fans all remember when Dynamix's *Red Baron* and *Aces of the Pacific* were the hottest air combat games around, but lately, Dynamix has been pretty much grounded when it came to new sims. Sierra is promising to deliver *Red Baron II* this spring, but it's been a long dry spell.

But acquisition doesn't have to dampen the creative spark at a smaller software publisher. Sierra bought Impressions, which then released *Caesar II*, easily the best Impressions title to date and one of the best economic/strategy games of 1995.

Still, computer racers who've grown accustomed to seeing sure winners roll out of Papyrus' garage will be watching closely as the company starts operating under its new corporate parent. There are no better computer simulations available than *NASCAR Racing* and the *IndyCar Racing* games, period. Now that Papyrus has been swallowed up by the Sierra giant, what will happen to that high level of quality and realism?



As long as the Sierra deal doesn't keep Papyrus from developing a sequel to *NASCAR Racing*, we'll be satisfied.

Lee Buchanan



Not to worry, say the folks at Papyrus. The new ownership will bring only positive change, especially a relative freedom from financial concerns. "Sierra acquired us because of our success, our talent, and our people," says Ann Marie Gianantoni of Papyrus. "They plan to keep everything intact."

"The people here are pretty excited about the acquisition," she says. "With the new resources, we have the ability to acquire other technical expertise from the other Sierra companies."

Those resources can mean even better games, and possibly more of them. Sierra is "anxious to see what we can produce here," Gianantoni says. "Everyone's kind of buzzing and thinking about the things we can do, how we can make our existing products better."

Should you look for other types of products from Papyrus, something other than first-class racing sims? Not right away, anyway; driving sims are a hot category, and nobody does it better than Papyrus. But "there are other ideas floating around," Gianantoni says. "Products other than racing simulations are definitely being discussed."

What's next from Papyrus? Plans aren't definite, but a Mac version of *NASCAR Racing* looks doubtful. Meanwhile, their multiplayer online racing service remains in development, although a possible release date hasn't been set.

Sierra's Rebecca Buxton says Papyrus will operate as a separate division. "Papyrus is a super-successful and popular company," she says. "We have absolutely no intention of changing the flavor of Papyrus products. One thing the company is excited about is that Dynamix and Papyrus can work together and exchange technologies."

All that positive spin seems encouraging, but history has plenty of examples of creative fires that were snuffed out by acquisition. Still, the folks at Sierra seem determined not to change a winning formula, and why should they? Let's keep our fingers crossed. If nothing else, Papyrus simply must produce at least one copy of *NASCAR Racing II*.

And send it to me.

PCG



Sierra says the *IndyCar Racing II* designers won't be changed.

History has taught us to be anxious when one of our favorite developers is bought by a larger company, but Sierra promises the king of racing will remain unchanged.

For Professional Use Only?

Unless you run a corporate data network or manage a computer-aided design lab, Intel says you don't need to worry about its new Pentium Pro. These CPUs are quite a bit faster than our now-amateur-grade Pentiums, but the official line from Intel is that Pentium Pros are meant for network server systems and technical workstations, not for desktop PCs.

Now, we've heard this line before. The 386, 486, and Pentium chips were also aimed at technical users first, since the earliest systems were too expensive, too fussy, or too limited in some way for the general market. But it was only a matter of months before each of these CPUs became the standard for all types of personal computers. So why should the Pentium Pro be any different?

It has something to do with the way Pentium Pro chips are made. For each new processor chip, Intel has usually unveiled a new, more compact fabrication process, packing more circuitry into each square millimeter of silicon. But the Pro uses the same process and the same feature sizes as a standard Pentium chip. All of the Pro's added speed comes from the circuit elements — from what chip designers like to call "architectural" changes. But along with the new design come higher costs and some other limitations that are supposed to keep this CPU out of the mass market.

In high-performance CPUs, instructions are passed down a pipeline of execution units, an assembly line where each unit performs part of the work needed to execute instructions. The Pro has twelve execution units in its pipeline, compared to five units in a standard Pentium. Each unit performs a smaller bit of processing, and instructions pass from stage to stage more quickly, letting the Pro operate at a 33 percent higher clock speed.

For the Pentium Pro's "superpipelined" architecture to work, instructions must keep flowing smoothly through the pipeline stages, and it isn't easy to guarantee this will always happen. Several things can go wrong: "Data dependencies" will stall the pipeline if one instruction calculates a value used by the next instruction; the CPU can't execute the second instruction until the first one finishes.

To keep every transistor as busy as possible, the Pentium Pro uses an approach that Intel calls "Dynamic Execution;" as long as it doesn't affect the logic of the program, instructions can be processed out of order. If one instruction isn't ready to execute, the CPU can look as far as twenty instructions ahead to find one that's ready to go. Some of the more complex instructions can be broken into simpler micro-operations, and even these can be executed out of order.

Branch instructions (instructions that send the CPU off to a different part of the program if a logical condition is satisfied) also cause problems, since the instruction to be fed into the pipeline next depends on whether or not the branch is taken. The Pro's Branch Prediction Unit tries to keep the pipeline moving, correctly guessing the result of a branch instruction more than 90 percent of the time.

Intel also designed some clever new packaging for the Pentium Pro. There are actually two chips inside the package: the CPU itself, plus a level-two memory cache chip. Computers that use 486 or Pentium processors usually include the level-two cache as part of the system's motherboard; by including the processor chip and 256 or 512 kilobytes of cache in the same package, the Pro can integrate them more tightly for better overall performance.

It sounds wonderful so far, but there are a couple of reasons why the Pentium Pro is a high-end-only chip. Cost is one: with 5.5 million transistors on board the processor, it's a big chip, so a wafer of raw silicon doesn't yield very many finished CPUs. Initial prices range from about $1,000 for a 150MHz Pro with a 256K cache to nearly $2,000 for the 200MHz, 512K package that will be available later this year.

Another drawback stems from Intel's decision to optimize the Pentium Pro for 32-bit code — at the expense of 16-bit performance. That's no problem for workstation and server operating systems like Windows NT and Unix. But most general-purpose applications still use 16-bit code, and the Pentium Pro is reportedly slower than a standard Pentium when executing these instructions. Even Windows 95, a 32-bit operating system, has to include a fair amount of 16-bit code to ensure total compatibility with MS-DOS and Windows 3.1.

But there might be another reason why Intel is saying that the Pentium Pro isn't for us. Think about the "SX/DX" issue. The 386DX was a full 32-bit processor, while 386SX CPUs had a 32-bit internal core and a 16-bit bus connecting it to the rest of the computer. Later, all the 486 CPUs were 32-bit processors both internally and externally, but the 486DX chips included math coprocessors while the 486SXs didn't. It wasn't apparent at first, but those names said less about technical features than they did about how Intel positioned and priced the chips. The "Pro" designation might turn out to be the same kind of thing.

Features like superpipelining and Dynamic Execution will eventually show up in desktop PCs, whatever the name on the CPU. Meanwhile, the Pentium Pro's unimpressive 16-bit performance might bother gamers less than it does other computer users, since game programmers have been so eager to adopt the 32-bit instruction set. With the first systems priced as low as $4000, Intel won't be able to keep these systems out of the hands of power-glutton game players, nor would it want to.

PCG


Tim Victor

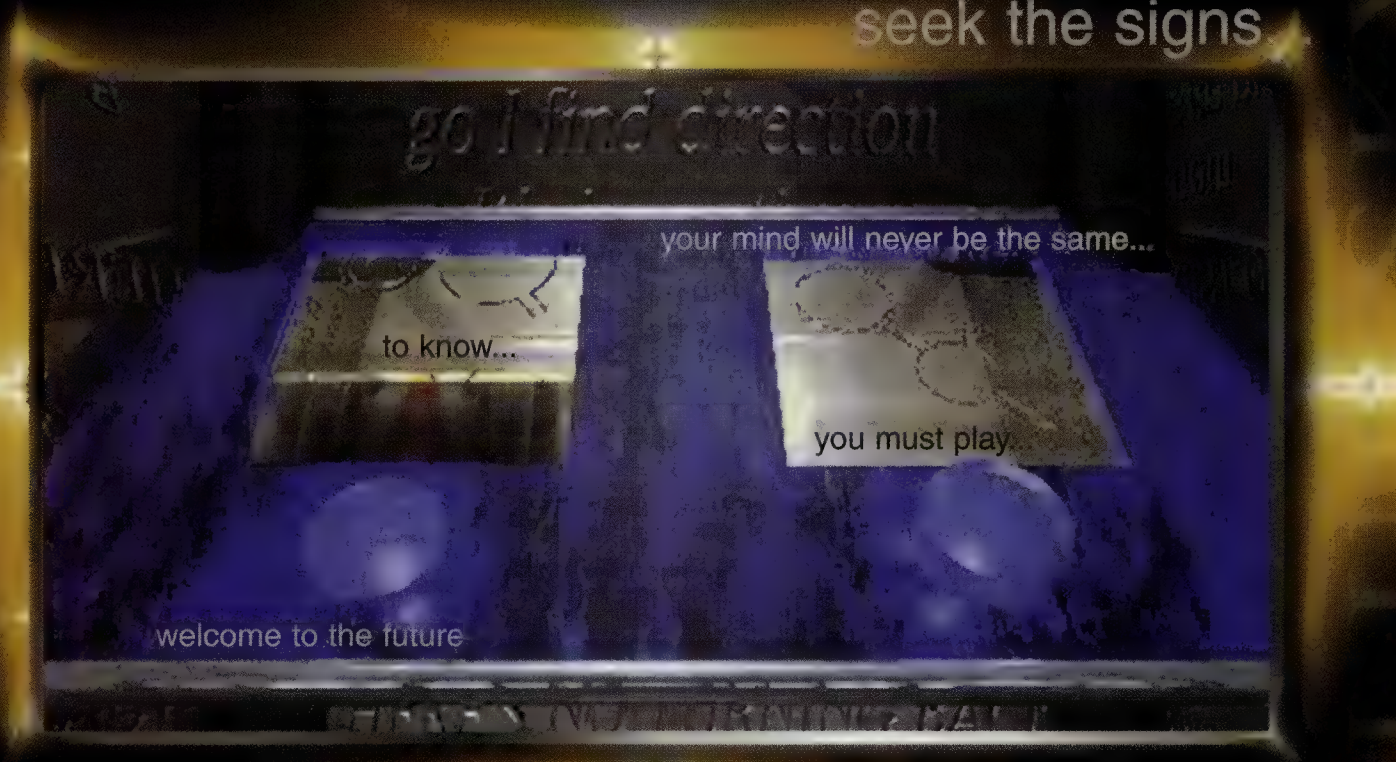
The Pentium Pro is finally here, but Intel isn't aiming it at desktop users — and gamers should know it may not be as fast with some games as their tried-and-true Pentiums.

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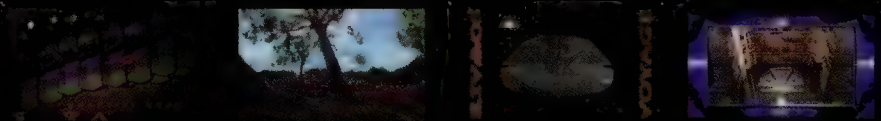
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STRATEGY CENTRAL

SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

The Strategy Central crew drew straws to see who could fight off the side-effects of *Warcraft II* withdrawal just long enough to put together some hints, tips, and cheats for this amazing strategy game. While there was only one winner, the rest of the crew had fun, too, learning the secrets of *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure* and helping a reader through the dark corridors of *Aliens*.

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Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Destroy the Horde with these devastating strategies!

After many sleepless nights of battling orcs, ogres and dragons, the Strategy Central crew finally destroyed the last remnants of the despicable Horde, putting an end to the reign of terror that forced the humans out of Azeroth. Though the cost in casualties was high, these brave generals were eager to lend their sage advice for beating the tough scenarios in *Warcraft II*. So without any further ado, here are some tips for surviving a career as the human commander.

In the Beginning...

As you get beyond the basic tutorial missions, you'll find that the strategy of simply building an overwhelming force isn't enough to defeat your opponents in *Warcraft II*. While the variety of missions means it's hard to develop a set strategy, one thing remains constant — cranking out farms and peasants so you can maximize resource-gathering should always be at the top of your list. You should have at least ten peasants going into the mines, five or six chopping trees, and one guy building farms and the essential upgrades — the smithy, the stable and the lumber mill.

Hold off on building a lot of military units until you can build knights (or Ogres), and then just build enough to secure your path to the mines. Don't expend a lot of effort scouting around with foot units; wait until you can get some cheap aerial scouts — the zeppelins or gnomish flying machines. And definitely don't waste a lot of time and energy making small raids with light forces; they'll only let your enemy know what direction you're coming from and distract you from building a major fighting force.



This narrow channel is lined with overwhelming firepower, ready to destroy your vessels.

Managing Advanced Weaponry

Once you've got the basic units in plentiful supply and you've upgraded your town hall, you'll want to start experimenting with some of the new firepower available to you. Researching magic is important, although you'll need to remember that mages are relatively weak and should be kept well away from the front lines. But with two mages and the invisibility and blizzard spells, you can wreak some major havoc on unsuspecting orcs. Have one mage make the other invisible, then take the invisible mage towards the enemy's town, where a wall of axe throwers and ogres is probably waiting just outside. Unleash a blizzard spell on them, then follow up with a group of nine paladins or other heavy units. This will succeed against all but the most prepared opponent.

If you're isolated on an island, you will also need to build a superior naval force. Keep mixed groups of naval units, with at least one flying unit grouped with your battleships, subs and destroyers, so you'll be able to spot the submarines and destroy them. Keep three or four oil tankers going, and keep a battle group both at your main oil platform and near your harbor. Do some aerial scouting of the enemy's shipping, you may find some units left without aerial pickets, just waiting for a task force of three submarines to take out. Remember that without subs or aerial forces, even the battleships are helpless against your submarines.

Down and Dirty

A very nasty trick (especially in a multiplayer game) you can use against your opponents is to load a transport with six powerful units, then cast an invisibility spell on the transport. When the transport unloads, preferably in your enemy's town, the six units seem to attack from nowhere. This works especially well if you load the transport with demolition squads; six bomb squads can take out a barracks or even a town hall in short order, bringing enemy production to its knees. For the same reason, you should keep pickets along your shore.

Mission Walkthroughs

The Ninth Mission

In this one, you have no peasants — only ships and men — and you must run a gauntlet of cannon towers, catapults and destroyers to rescue the Lightbringer from the northwestern

corner of the map and take him down to Caer Darrow in the southeast corner. The key to success is selectively applying overwhelming force to exposed enemy units.

First, scout around with your flying machines to get an overview of the naval situation. You should see that there is a long, narrow channel lined with catapults, cannon towers, and destroyers that will put you at the bottom of the sea if you try to crash through head on. There are also plenty of enemy forces waiting to cause havoc in the southeast.



Superior firepower selectively applied is the key to winning the ninth human mission.

Now that you are aware of the situation, you need to clear out the sea between the channels. Group your destroyers and battleships together and move south, clearing the two enemy destroyers out of the open seas. Try to have all your warships firing at once, so you can sink the enemy without losing any of your own.

At this point, with most of your force intact, it is a good idea to completely secure the sea route to the city. Take out the enemy towers one by one by bringing in your battleships and blasting away at the nearest, while staying out of range of the others. When fighting catapults, you can actually dodge enemy fire by moving just as he fires. An amphibious landing on the north island to engage the enemy catapult and axe throwers is also a good idea; the human ships with orange banners are your enemies as well.

With your rear secure, it's time to get the Lightbringer. You need to lure the remaining enemy destroyers out of the channel. This can be difficult, but you can use an empty transport to go into the channel, just barely, and then head back to safety. This will bring the destroyers out into the bay, where you can crush them with your battleships. Be careful your ships don't get too close to the shore and take fire, or they will move in and get sunk.

At this point, you can now bring your battleships into shore and take out the towers one at a time, without getting in range of the other towers. The southern island is less defended, and if you can completely clear it, the rest of your ships can hug the shore when crossing the channel.

With the enemy firepower along the shore greatly reduced, you can now make a run for the Lightbringer. Send all four transports and any remaining destroyers straight through the channel, all the way up to the Ambassador. If you've taken out enough towers and catapults, you can get through with hardly a scratch. Load the ambassador on the transport that has taken the least damage and send them through again. Regroup, and it should be clear sailing to the city.

The 11th Mission

In this mission, you must liberate the peasants and mages and destroy the treacherous nation of Alteroc. Since you again start with no peasants or buildings, your first priority will be the rescue, so you can build up your forces for an assault on the town.

It will take a lot of old-fashioned blundering around to locate the peasants, and if you don't find them quickly, your armies will be too worn down to liberate them. (If you want to find them for yourself, don't read on.)

The peasants are locked up in the northwestern corner of the map, guarded by walls and cannon towers. You have both ballistae and dwarven sappers to take out the towers, and you'll have to use your other troops to screen them from enemy land units. Once you've liberated the prisoners, immediately send everyone back to your town and start building. You'll want lots more dwarven sappers to take out the gun towers of Alteroc.



You must rescue these peasants before you can build reinforcements. There are quite a few cannon towers waiting to blow you to kingdom come, though.

The 13th Mission

This mission is extremely difficult, with a frantic pace and damaging onslaughts right from the start. You will run out of resources and be hit by constant assaults of dragons and landings of frenzied Ogres, so your first priority is putting the town and gold mine behind a defensive wall.

Block off most of your town with cannon towers and farms. (Since you can't build walls in single-player games, farms will do just as well, and they actually have more hit points than towers.) Watch over your woodcutters, making sure they hollow out the forest without creating any gaps for the enemy to sneak through.



The 13th human mission brings your first opportunity to use gryphons. Build as many as you can as fast as you can, and pull them back when they're injured so your Paladins can heal them.



A wall of farms keeps the Ogres out and your peasants in, and it provides food for your hungry troops as well.

When you run out of gold, you'll have to clear out a couple of the neighboring islands and begin mining there. Once the island is secure, ship your peasants in and begin mining. Rather than transporting the gold by ship back to your main keep, build another town hall near the new mine; your gold production will go much faster.

Warcraft II Cheat Codes

Just like the original *Warcraft*, there are a few cheat codes for *Warcraft II* to help you out when things get rough. Keep in mind, thought, that these cheats affect your opponents as well — so don't be surprised if a cheat gets you killed! To use the codes, hit the Enter key during a game, type the code you want, then hit Enter again.

VALDEZ — Gives you 5000 oil
MAKE IT SO — Rapid construction and unit training
THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE — Shows you the finale
NOGLUES — Renders magical traps useless
HATCHET — Chop down trees with two hits
ON SCREEN — Reveal map, even in multi-player games
SHOWPATH — Reveal map
IT IS A GOOD DAY TO DIE — Make your soldiers invincible

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

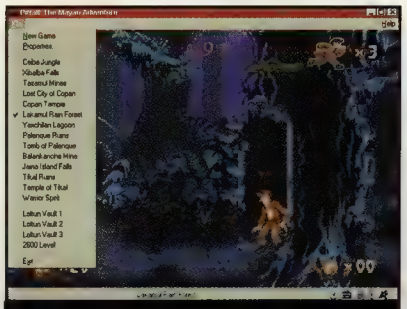
The secrets of the Mayans revealed!

With the release of *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, Activision returned to the familiar jungle setting of their classic Atari 2600 game, *Pitfall*, and brought it into the 1990s with fast graphics and even faster action. Like most gamers, we've enjoyed the bungee-jumping antics of its swashbuckling hero, Harry Jr., as he whips, jumps and fights his way through deadly swamps, treacherous cliffs, and rickety mine shafts. But this one eventually had even the gaming veterans at *PC Gamer* begging for mercy. So when we caught wind of a few cheat codes that could make things a little easier for our arthritic thumbs, we knew we just had to share them with our readers. To enable the cheats, simply type them at any time during the game.

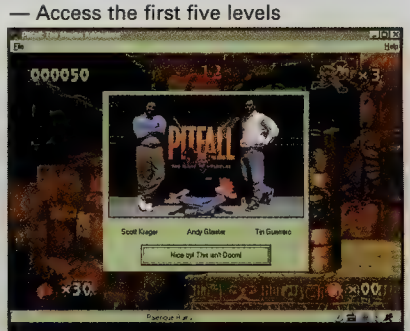


This is one of the more bizarre cheats we've seen ... by using the "HATMAN" cheat, you can turn Harry Jr. into a rotund stick figure.

FRAMERATE
— Displays the frame rate
HATMAN
— Turns Harry Jr. into a stick figure
HATMAN
(second time)
— Turns creatures into stick figures
HATMAN
(third time)
— Returns the game to normal
LETSDOTHETIMEWARP
— Access the secret Atari 2600 level of *Pitfall*
IDBUYTHATFORADOLLAR
— Gives you access to every level, including the original *Pitfall* level
IDDQD
— Try it!
MEOWMEOWLIKEMEOWMAN
— Gives the player nine lives
PUMPYOUUP
— Reloads weapons with 99 of each
EATMOREBRAN
— Gives you nine continues
FIVEEASYPIECES
— Access the first five levels



If you've been struggling to get through some of the levels in *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, you can finally play them all with the handy level cheat.



To see the Pitfall designers desplay their sense of humor, type the IDDQD cheat.

Reader's Requests

Aliens: Give the man a hand



Amidst the fallen colonists, you'll find a switch located at the stairwell; it's your key to getting that hand.

Dear Strategy Central,

I just purchased Mindscape's graphic adventure, *Aliens*, and managed to get through the first few puzzles in the game without much trouble (landing the ship, feeding the crew, etc.), but now I'm stuck. After sending my crew through the station, I've managed to explore most of the complex and have come across a hand scanner that should give me access to more of the station, but I can't figure out where I can find a hand to activate the scanner. I've got the red passcard and skybot, but I don't know where to go from here. Can you help?

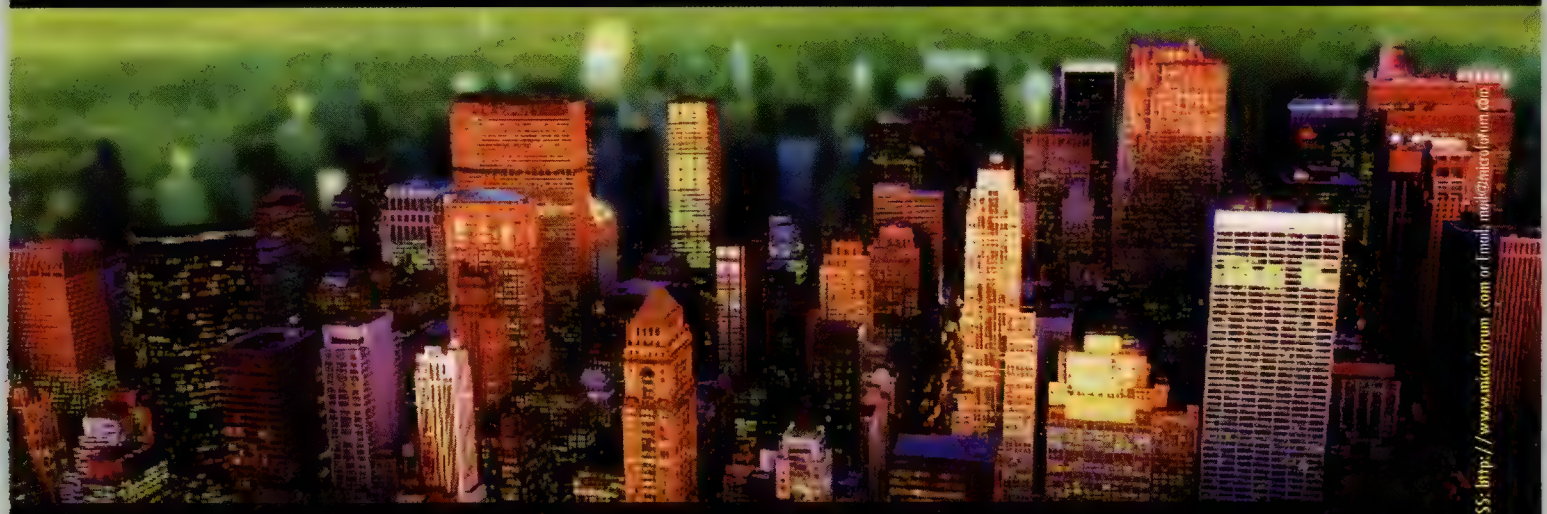
Robert Thompson
via AOL



Use this terminal to give you access to the white door in the docking bay.

We'd be happy to help, Robert, although you're already close to finding the answer on your own. Near the elevator on the second level (where you found the red passcard and skybot), there is a red box. Use this box to activate the white door in the docking bay (you'll see a red light when it's active). Now return to the docking bay and use the terminal on the raised platform to open the white door. On the other side of the door, you'll find a dead colonist that can provide the helping hand you need. Use Lora to cut the hand off of the colonist, and don't forget to take the CD-ROM. PCG

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Microforum's Virtual Corporation, the first totally voice-controlled (keyboard optional) CD-ROM game for Windows® '95, takes you into a cold-blooded world where only the strong survive. Virtual Corporation transports you into the not-too-distant future where you are given the opportunity of becoming President of Pogodyne Systems—the most powerful Internet corporation in the world. Starting on the lowest rung of the corporate ladder, you begin an exhilarating race to the top of the corporation where you will experience it all. The road to becoming master of your own destiny, rests upon your ability to form alliances within the heart of the Virtual Corporation. No one is secure. Nothing is as it seems. Intrigue, relationships, espionage and constant surveillance are but a few of the elements you must learn to master, in order to make it to the Presidency. Microforum's Virtual Corporation provides sensational interactivity thanks to the use of the latest voice-recognition technology. No voice training is required. You simply talk to the various characters in the game by using the microphone provided for you.

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LETTERS

We're not entirely sure, but we're beginning to think some of our more eloquent readers are trying to send us secret messages via the *PC Gamer* mailbag. What may seem to be an innocent note about multiplayer gaming or the latest volley in the ongoing operating system debate may actually conceal information vital to our national security — if only we could decipher the code in time. That's not paranoid, is it?

Let's Hear From You!

Write to:

PC Gamer Letters
150 North Hill Dr.,
Suite 40,
Brisbane, CA 94005

or E-mail to:

peeceegee@aol.com
74431,3433@compuserve.com

Spawning Extra Orcs

Dear PC Gamer,

I just bought Blizzard's great game, *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness*. Blizzard did something with this game that I think is just spectacular — they made it possible for the person who bought the game to copy it over to a friend's computer so that they both can enjoy the multiplayer part of the game without having to buy two copies of the game. This is something that other game developers should try to do. I mean, let's face it; when you buy a game because it has multi-player options, you can't expect that all of your friends are going to buy the same game just so they can play against you over the modem. The thing that Blizzard did to curb pirating was to make it so that only the multiplayer option is available to the person who does not have the *Warcraft II* CD-ROM in their machine; this way people don't just give all of their friends a free workable copy of the game. I don't know if Blizzard invented this simple concept, but it is clear that they had the gamer in mind when they included this feature.



Warcraft II's ability to "spawn" copies of itself for multiplayer purposes has gamers cheering.

Thank you,
Casey Mann
via AOL

P.S.: I hate it when game developers only include network multi-player support and not modem support. Who the hell out there on a network (like people at their jobs, not at home) has the time to play computer games? People play this stuff at home, over a modem!

Warcraft II isn't the first game with the ability to "spawn" extra copies for multi-player purposes only, but it makes the best use of this concept we've seen. It's just another example of how much thought Blizzard gave to gamers when they designed the game — which is at the heart of our reasons for naming Warcraft II *Game of the Year. Not only is the spawning feature a great convenience for gamers looking for online opponents, it's a brilliant marketing strategy on Blizzard's part; they had to know that anyone who tried out the multi-player-only version of* Warcraft II *would want a copy of the full game. As for games that only support multi-player action on local-area networks, they puzzle us, too. Sure, we get paid to play games on our LAN from time to time, and we'd stay at the office and play 'em after hours if we didn't. But we can count on one hand the number of gamers we know of who've set up networks in their homes.*

OS Wars: A New Player?

Dear PC Gamer,

It amazes me how the PC industry has "waged" war back and forth between DOS, OS/2, and Windows 95 while ignoring the real operating system contender: Linux. Why would anyone want an OS that sucked down 8MBs of memory to run poorly and is targeted only at 486 machines and up, when we're able to run a more complex OS on 386 machines. There are no games out for Linux, one might argue. That, however, would be ignoring *Doom* and *Abuse*, which run quite nicely simultaneously under the X Window System. Hmmm, workstation power on a PC. Nope, we would not want anything so powerful. Besides, running networked games would be much too easy, since X was designed to reduce network load by distributing apps to other machines and redirecting the output to your screen. Just imagine, you could run *Doom* on the idle machine down the hall while *you* get to see all the action. Not to mention this platform is a game-developer's paradise. Perhaps we should send the message to the developers before 32MB is the minimum required memory for *MS Paint* to operate properly.

Sincerely,
Mark Van Noy
via AOL

You're neglecting one extremely important element of any operating system that's going to be used at home, where most people do their gaming: user friendliness. Linux and X are powerful systems, but they can't hold a candle to Win95, or even OS/2, in the ease-of-use arena. And if PC gaming is going to reach its full potential audience, it's going to have to be as accessible as possible.

The Sweet Science

Dear PC Gamer,

I'm an avid reader of your magazine. After graduating from the realm of Nintendo and Sega platforms, I now sit behind the wheel of a 486 multimedia PC. My question is this: Where are the boxing games? There are Kung Fu fighters, wrestlers, robot warriors, and even fighting animals! I would give my left mouse-click for even *one* game/sim to represent the sweet science of boxing. If I have overlooked any (and believe me, I've looked), I would appreciate your superior abilities to locate such a prize.

Thanks,
Gene Bingham
Lipan, TX

Unfortunately, you're right about the shortage of boxing games on the PC, Gene. The bad news is that the last really good one, Electronic Arts' 4D Boxing, *came out several years ago. The good news is that you can probably still find a copy (at a sizable discount) if you're willing to do a little hunting — and since it was designed in the*

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days of the 386, it should run beautifully on your machine. If you're willing to try a stats-based game without arcade action or flashy graphics, you might look for Comp-U-Sports' Title Fight Pro Boxing for Windows, *which lets you pit history's greatest pugilists against each other.*

Getting Hitched

Dear PC Gamer,

I've got to ask a question that has plagued gamers for quite some time: Why is it that the games have to be so far ahead of the buying curve when it comes to system requirements? I have been gaming on my 90 MHz Pentium with 16MB of RAM, 2MB of DRAM on a 64-bit, PCI video card, and a high-end hard drive, and I still find myself "hitching," at times, when some games play. (You know what hitching is like; it's that awful excruciating moment when you pull the stick to the left while your index finger is pressed firmly on the trigger — and nothing happens for a split-second? It's like shooting a black-powder rifle.) Even when the P90 was the fastest chip out there, I found games that hitched every now and again when I played them. Right now, *Hexen* seems to be the worst when it comes to that awful second when I don't know if it was me or the other guy who received the brunt of battle. I spoke to a friend of mine with 32MB of memory and a P100, and he told me that he had similar trouble with *Primal Rage*. Is it something in the software? I have one heck of a long load time for *Battle for Jason's Star* missions, yet Origin's *Wing Commander III* loads expediently.

Sincerely,
Jim Woodard
Virginia Beach, VA

"Hitching" — that's as good a word for it as we've heard. These annoying little freeze-ups are often tied to disk access; the game has to pause for a bit while it reads data it needs from the hard drive or CD-ROM. About all you can do short of buying even faster drives is to make sure you're putting some of your memory to work in the form of a cache, a program that stores disk data in RAM for faster access. The SmartDrive cache that comes with MS-DOS is a pretty good one — with 16MB of memory, you should be able to set up a 2MB cache without taking too much RAM from your games. SmartDrive won't solve all your problems — and it can actually slow down some games that do their own caching — but it usually brings some improvement. For details on SmartDrive, check your DOS manual, or type "HELP SMARTDRV" at a DOS prompt.

Reviewing History

Dear PC Gamer,

I would like to leave a note in your suggestion box: Have you ever considered doing brief reviews on older games that came out before you started *PC Gamer*? You might want to consider telling gamers about older games that are a whole lot better than the cheap garbage that companies are shelling out today. Games like those in the Kings Quest and Monkey Island series are a lot better than some of the stuff on the market these days, and I feel that they don't get the credit they deserve. Some of the old timers still have a lot of pep in them.



Older games like LucasArts' *Monkey Island 2* can give the latest titles a run for their money.

Sincerely,
Kirk Battle
Conway, SC

We've gotten a few other requests like yours since we started PC Gamer, *Kirk. Unfortunately, space just doesn't permit us to look back at older games. The magazine is quite a bit bigger today than it was just a year ago, but the gaming industry has grown, too — so it's all we can do to keep up with all the* new *titles being published every month.*

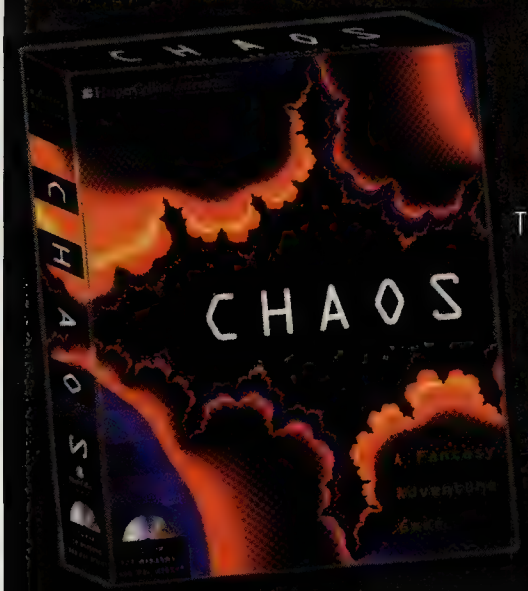
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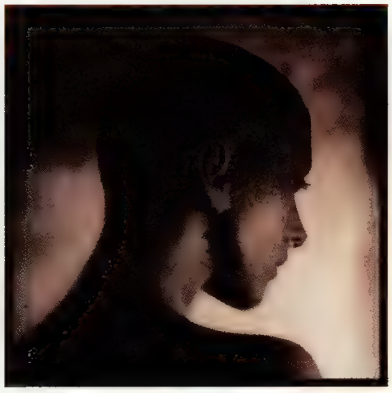
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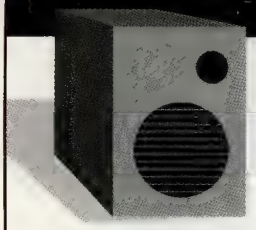
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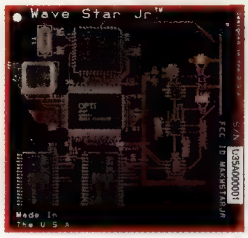
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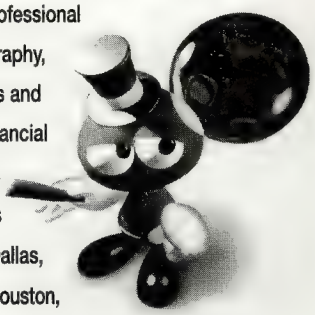
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Next Time in PC Gamer...

Vol. 3 No. 4 Goes On Sale March 12 Don't Miss It!

If you buy only one issue of *PC Gamer* next month, make sure it's the April issue! Here's what we've got planned...

MAGIC IN MARYLAND

Do titles like *Civilization II*, *Master of Orion II* and *X-COM: The Apocalypse* get your gaming juices flowing? Of course they do — you're a PC gamer, aren't you? We'll visit the offices of MicroProse to bring you the exclusive, inside story on all those games, plus *Magic: The Gathering*, *1943: European Air War*, and more!



Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares is the much-anticipated sequel to one of MicroProse's most successful strategy games.

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Sim-per Fi!

What do you have in common with the Marines? More than you may think — and we're not talking about those space marines in *Doom*. The U.S. Marines have decided computer sims are finally good enough to be a part of their rigorous training, and they've jumped into PC gaming in a big way. Be here next month for an exclusive interview with the brass.

PC GAMER

March 1996

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Meanwhile, Private Gordon Pepperhat, executive assistant to Colonel Gaskins, was returning to camp after a foray into the bushes. Large desert mushrooms lined his path, and he couldn't help but notice the uniquely delicious odor drifting from the fungi. Private Pepperhat, who was not about to pass up this opportunity to go native, began munching on the 'shrooms as if they were Doritos. A grand vision of unicorns and lollipops came to Private Pepperhat (known to his friends as Salty), and he fell into a stupor he hadn't felt since that party at Molly Groshong's wedding. Ah, Molly... "Molly and Salty sitting on a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g, first comes love, then..."

Suddenly, a vision came to Private Pepperhat that could only be described as callipygian. A man, wearing only a press pass, was standing before him, gesturing wildly and trying to speak. Private Pepperhat strained to understand the man, and then, finally, it came to him: "My name is Chip Elko, and I'm here to warn you: Don't let Stearns use the grapefruit spoon! Millions of lives are depending on you, Private Pepperhat, to stop that maniac from using that spoon!"

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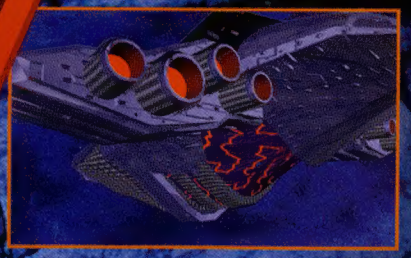
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